

THE
CHILDREN'S HOUR

DOERNER-SCHORR



THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

SERMONS FOR THE CHILDREN'S MASS

EDITED BY

THE REV. KARL DÖRNER

ADAPTED INTO ENGLISH BY

THE REV. ANDREW SCHORR

B. HERDER BOOK CO.,

15 & 17 SOUTH BROADWAY, ST. LOUIS, MO.,

AND

33 QUEEN SQUARE, LONDON, W. C.

1929

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Printed in U. S. A.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Sti. Ludovici, die 24. Junii, 1929,

Joannes Rothensteiner,

Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR

Sti. Ludovici, die 26. Junii, 1929,

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Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., Binghamton and New York

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THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

I. ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

THE FORERUNNER OF OUR BLESSED REDEEMER

I. JOURNEYING ACROSS THE WILDERNESS TO MEET ST. JOHN

(First Sunday of Advent)

MY dear children! No doubt you were a bit alarmed this morning when you heard me read the Gospel about the end of the world and the Last Judgment. Did you notice the purple vestments which the priest and the altar boys are wearing? Both Gospel and vestments admonish you to become better! Why? Because it is Advent. We are preparing for Christmas, and only good children are admitted to the crib to receive gifts and graces at the hands of the Infant Saviour. Are you all as good as you could be? What would you do if some one were to point out all your faults? Would you not feel like crawling beneath the pews and hiding your face for shame? I am afraid you would. What are we to do? You need a preacher to preach penance to you. Who shall this preacher be? Let it be *St. John the Baptist*, the first Advent preacher. Let us seek him out in

the wilderness. Perhaps we may learn something about him on the way.

- I. *What do we hear about him, and*
- II. *What lesson can we learn from his life and teaching?*

I

Suppose, dear children, people would tell you about a mysterious man who lived alone out in the prairie, clothed in camel hair, who ate nothing but locusts and wild honey, and who suddenly began to preach to the people. How many in the city, do you think, would drive out to see and hear him? Just so it was with the Jews. One day it was rumored in the city of Jerusalem, that a strange man was preaching and baptising in the river Jordan. Immediately crowds flocked out into the desert to hear him—men, women, and children, rich and poor, Pharisees and publicans. What did they talk about on the way? About the mysterious prophet, you may be sure, whom they were going to see and hear. Everybody tells what he knows about the Baptist. A man from John's own mountain village, who knows his home and family, says he remembers the time when John's aged father died and that John did not come home for the funeral. He did not even come home for the funeral of his good mother. John had never been an ordinary boy. His parents, Zachary and Elizabeth, were old and gray when John was born. Years and years they had prayed for a son, but not until they were beyond all hope did God grant their

request. An angel appeared to Zachary in the Temple and told him that God would give them a son, and they should call him John. But Zachary would not believe it and, as a punishment for his unbelief, lost his speech until the divine promise was fulfilled. The angel said that John was destined to be a great man, for he was to prepare the Jewish people for the coming of the Messias.

“Behold,” said the people who were going out into the desert from Jerusalem, “perhaps we shall see with our own eyes the truth of the things that have been foretold of this strange man,” and they hastened to meet him. The man from John’s home town told some more remarkable things. One day, he said, a cousin of Elizabeth came from Galilee into the hill-country. Her name was Mary, and strange and astonishing things were said about her; for instance, that she was a holy virgin whom God had promised a son; that one day the two little boys, John and the Virgin’s son, spoke together of their Father in Heaven, and even old and wise folks could not understand them and wondered what these children were talking about. From that day on John became more serious and would ask his father to read the Sacred Scriptures to him, especially the passages concerning the Messias. Morning and evening he prayed: “Drop down dew from above, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a saviour!” John was so different from other boys. He joined in none of their pranks and drank no wine or other strong drinks. When he was only fifteen or sixteen years old, he told

his parents goodbye, saying it was the will of God that he should live alone in the desert. Nobody could keep him back. He went out into the desert and lived there, for about fifteen years now. His home was a cave in the clefts of the rock. Locusts and wild honey were his food. He quenched his thirst at some mountain brook. During all these years no one knew anything of his whereabouts, until all of a sudden he appeared in the Jordan valley and preached penance.

While the people from Jerusalem are thus conversing together, a loud, harsh voice strikes their ears, exclaiming: "Do penance, or you will be lost!" The crowd gazes at him, stricken with awe, as he stands there on a high cliff, tall and emaciated, wearing a coarse mantle of camel's skin over his shoulders and a leather belt. The wild, curly hair and the unkempt beard framing his pale face, give him a very austere and dignified appearance. He stood there like a living picture which none who saw could ever forget. He was fearless and commanding in all he said and did. He spoke of but one thing: "Prepare—do penance—the Saviour is coming!"

Dear children! This is the man who will preach to you during Advent. His very figure and all we have heard about him are a powerful sermon. Our Divine Saviour said of him that he was the greatest among the Saints. And why? Because he was firm and unbending like an oak tree, not like a reed shaken by the wind

and bending before the storm. Where did St. John obtain this strength? You have just heard how he acted when he was a child. For example: he resolved never to drink wine or any other strong drink, and nothing in the world could make him break his resolution. Do you think it was great fun for him to leave his home and live in the wilderness for fifteen long years, eating grasshoppers and drinking plain water? Had he stayed at home his mother would have given him the best of everything. But he denied himself all these comforts and that is what made him the great Saint he was.

Do you realize, my dear boys and girls, that if you want others to honor and respect you in life, you must now, in the days of your youth, begin to practise self-discipline and learn to endure patiently the hard and unpleasant things of life? You don't have to go out into the desert, nor dress in camel's hair, nor eat locusts and wild honey;—no, but you must patiently bear the unpleasant things of everyday life and faithfully discharge tasks and duties that seem hard and disagreeable. Do not shirk them, do not run away from them, but face them squarely, take them up in earnest, fighting the good fight, and I assure you that in the end you will be strong, patient men, fully devoted to your work as St. John was to his mission. For instance, don't give your mother trouble by becoming disagreeable because you are asked to lend a helping hand or something is set before you that you do not like! Another very good resolution would be not to dream all day long about the Christmas presents you want. Think how poor our Lord was when he came

into this world! You need not sleep on the hard floor of a cavern like St. John. But there is one thing you can and should do, especially during Advent. Arise promptly in the morning when you are called, be in church in time for Mass on Sundays and in school in time for class on weekdays, no matter how cold the weather may be!

A little boy in the third grade had a father who did not go to church. His mother was a Protestant and did not care whether the boy went to Mass or not. But the little fellow got up early every Sunday morning and hurried off to Mass. Once, on a very cold morning, his father told him to stay in bed and never mind about going to church. But the boy would not be kept back. "At eight o'clock, father," he said, "we have to be in church to sing those beautiful Advent hymns about the coming of the Christ Child. Oh, father, they are so beautiful, come, go with me to Mass this morning!" But his father would not get up and consoled him with the promise that he would go on Christmas morning. In his heart, however, he was proud of his boy because he was so punctual and pious. He kept his promise on Christmas day, and as he listened to the touching Christmas hymns, the faith of his childhood reawoke. Now he goes to Mass with his boy every Sunday. You see, children, this little boy was a forerunner of our Lord, just like St. John. He prepared the way for the coming of Jesus within his father's heart, and our Divine Saviour richly rewarded his zeal and prayers, for his father is a better Catholic now and shows his love for his son in many ways.

Learn a lesson from this little boy, my dear children. Be strict with yourselves, let nothing keep you from performing your duties, and help others who are not so well off as you are. Patiently bear the troubles of life and pray more fervently during this holy season. Thus you also will be a forerunner of the Lord, preparing other hearts for His coming by your good example. The Infant Jesus, you may be sure, will be glad to come to you and make you happy on the festival of His birth. Amen.

2. JOHN AT THE KING'S COURT AND IN PRISON

(Second Sunday of Advent)

MY dear children! To-day we do not find St. John in the wilderness, where we left him last Sunday, but in prison. The Gospel tells us that from his prison he sent a message to our Divine Saviour. How and why was John in prison? I will tell you.

I

Why was John in prison? One day, while he was exhorting the people to do penance and to lead a better life, some of his listeners said: "You should speak like that to our king! He took his brother's wife and is a very wicked man! Surely, as king, he should give a good example to his people!" What do you suppose John did? Do you think he said: "Hush, hush, my good people; don't you understand that I cannot say such things to the king! Why, he would lock me up or, worse yet, have me put to death!" No, John said

nothing of the kind. When he had found out that the people were telling the truth, he went straight to the city where the king had his residence. The fashionable citizens stared at him in amazement, as he marched through the principal streets, clad in a camel's skin, with hair all bristling and in wild disorder! "What brings this wild man here?" people asked themselves as they ran after him. At the entrance of the king's palace, John was stopped by a guard, who asked him what he wanted. "I want to speak to the king," he answered. "What is your business?" "I have something very important to tell him." The soldier reported to king Herod that a queer-looking man was at the gate and insisted on being admitted. Herod inquired who the odd-looking stranger was, and, when he had learned that he was John the Baptist, rejoiced in seeing in person a man about whom he had heard such strange things. He commanded: "Let him come in!" John entered the reception room, walked fearlessly up to King Herod, looked him in the face and said: "You are the king and all the people look up to you as their model! What kind of an example are you giving them? Even if you are a king, you are bound to keep the Commandments of God, who is king over the whole world. Hence, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife!" Herod was dumbfounded. Such a thing had never happened to him before. This bold man of the wilderness dared to call him a sinner right to his face. When he recovered his composure, he ordered John to be cast into prison. "Away with him," he thought, "away with this daring and annoying preacher. I never

want to see him again!" But the words of the preacher kept ringing in his ears: "It is not lawful for you!" Again and again he saw that piercing gaze fixed on himself, before which he, the king, trembled like a naughty child before his angry teacher. In spite of the fact that John was locked up in prison, King Herod had no peace. He hated this meddlesome monitor. And his wife Herodias hated him even more. But what could they do? Kill him! They were afraid of the people, who venerated St. John as a prophet.

Then came Herod's birthday. All the great ones of the realm had gathered at the royal palace to feast and indulged freely in strong wine. Salome, Herodias' daughter, was entertaining the half drunken king and his guests by shameless dancing. Herod, being immensely pleased, promised under oath to give her whatever she would ask of him, even if it were half of his kingdom. And what do you think the miserable creature asked for? She went to her mother and said: "Mother, what shall I ask of the king?" The mother hissed into her ear: "The head of John the Baptist!" Salome, returning to the king, said: "Give me the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter." And Herod in his drunken stupor gave orders to have John beheaded. The cruel Salome brought the still bleeding head into the spacious hall amidst the laughter and applause of the guests. Herod, too, laughed the loud and hoarse laugh of the sinner. But was he laughing inwardly? Oh, no! He no longer found rest. Day and night a face stood before him, pale as death, dumb, yet always speaking as that mouth once spoke: "It is not

lawful for you!" And when Jesus began to preach in public, Herod, hearing about it, thought that John had risen from the dead. He could not get rid of the thought of him, but lived on restlessly, going from bad to worse, until one day the judgment of God overtook him. A loathsome disease fastened itself on his body, spreading such a pestilential stench that nobody could endure his presence. Forsaken and despised by all, Herod died a miserable death. And do you know what happened to Salome, the godless dancer? The historian Nicephorus tells us that when Salome walked across a frozen lake one winter, the ice broke, she sank into the water up to her neck, and her head was cut off by the terrific force of the floating ice. The people hearing about it said: It served her right, God Himself has judged her.

2

My dear children! *What lesson shall we learn from this awful story?* Examine yourselves a little! Have you, perhaps, felt like King Herod occasionally? Are you, perhaps, a little Herod or a little Salome? Did an annoying monitor step up to you when you were doing wrong, and tell you to your face: "You are not allowed to do this—it is a sin!" Oh, how you hated him and wished him out of your way; but you could not do it. During a recent strike a band of thieves made their way into a grocery store and plundered everything they could lay hands on. They shouted at some little girls who were just coming out of school and invited them to come in and help themselves to all the

apples and the candy. But the monitor within them spoke clearly and fearlessly: "You may not do this—it is a sin; thieves and robbers steal, but not good children!" Some silenced their conscience, but they trembled with fear when a few days later the principal came into the class-room and started to investigate. The same thing happens every time you are tempted to do evil. When a companion tells a smutty story, or you want to lie to get out of a pinch, you will always hear this solemn voice: "You may not do it—it is unlawful!" Woe to you if you try to stifle that voice, for you will never have a moment's rest, and in the end God's judgment will overtake you, as it overtook Herod and Salome! Therefore, heed the warning of the Advent preacher who tells you to listen always to the voice of your conscience, which is the voice of God within you. And should there be some among you, large or small, who are bothered by a bad conscience, let them go and make a good confession. In return for this little penance done in Advent you will receive the richest and finest Christmas present, the Saviour's own peace and joy. And with that peace and joy in our hearts our Christmas will be a blessed one, because our hearts are rich and happy, even though we are as poor as the Infant Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem. Amen.

3. ST. JOHN'S SERMON TO THE PEOPLE

(Third Sunday of Advent)

(Cfr. Matth. III, 1-2; 5-10)

My dear children! Your Advent preacher, St. John, was a great and famous preacher. It is quite natural,

therefore, that some of the things he said should have been written down and preserved for the people who lived after him. I have just read to you a part of one of his sermons, which he preached on the banks of the river Jordan. He tells us how a good child should prepare for Christmas. "Do penance," he says, "for the kingdom of God is at hand!" In other words, "Christmas is approaching; the Infant Jesus will soon come to you! Now is the time to become better, so that the Holy Child may gladly come into your hearts!" But he also tells you what you must do to become better. You must expel from your hearts a mean and nasty fellow—the proud Pharisee. Some of you are looking at me as if you would say: "There is no such fellow in me. At least I never noticed him!" I gladly believe you, children. But others have noticed him and it is time for you to realize:

- I. *That there is a Pharisee in your heart, and*
- II. *That you must drive him out.*

I

Dear children! *What kind of people are these Pharisees?* You all know them well. You have often been told about them in catechism class, and no doubt you always liked the story of the Pharisee and the publican. It is a most interesting story.

A Pharisee once went up to the Temple to pray. Now let us picture him to ourselves as he walked through the streets of Jerusalem. His gaze was dig-

nified and measured. He cast a haughty glance at those who passed him, thinking within himself: "I am better, more learned, and more virtuous than all of them, and therefore have a better standing with God than they!" Entering the Temple, he noticed a publican standing near the rear entrance. The publicans were men who collected taxes for the Roman Empire. This tax-gatherer stood there, praying humbly. The Pharisee passed him up with contempt and scorn. "Another one of those wretched publicans," he thought, "fellows like him should be forbidden to set foot into the Temple!" Then he marched pompously through the main aisle up to the front and, I presume, having first thrown a coin into the collection box with much *éclat*, so that everybody in the Temple could hear it, he began to pray: "O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers: as also is this publican!" (Luke XVIII, 11.)

Dear children! From this story, as told by our Lord Himself, you can see what sort of people the Pharisees were. They were a set of proud, conceited men, who believed themselves to be the cleverest and most pious people on earth and imagined that God had every reason to be pleased with them. When these Pharisees went out to the Jordan to see and hear St. John the Baptist, they thought: "Of course, his sermons cannot be intended for us, for we are models of virtue. They are for those in front of us and behind us, but not for us!"

St. John was not slow to notice that the Pharisees

paid no heed to his preaching. He looked at them so sternly and persistently that all present could not help perceiving that he was speaking directly to them. And he told them: "Brood of vipers, . . . bring forth then fit fruit of repentance!" (Matth. III, 7-8.) The people, however, were glad that the Pharisees had the truth preached to them in this straightforward way.

And now, my dear children, let me ask you a question! It is for all of you. I ask: "Is there not perhaps a little, or even a big Pharisee within your soul?" The Pharisees did not die out after the time of our Saviour: there are plenty of them left to-day. And they are not all among the grown-ups, either; we find them also among the children, and who knows, maybe there are some Pharisees among you here!

Let me tell you a story about a boy who was a Pharisee. Johnny was not yet eleven years old. At the opening of school his class was shown to another room. The new teacher allowed the pupils to sit wherever they wished. Now it happened that Johnny came late the first day. As he entered the class-room, he found all seats occupied except the one alongside of a boy named Francis. Francis was a good boy, but he was poor and somewhat slow in his studies, whereas Johnny was one of the smartest in his grade, and he knew it. Besides, Johnny was of a rich family and was always well dressed, while Francis usually wore shabby clothes. As Johnny looked around for a seat, the boys insisted: "Sit down there besides Francis; don't you see there is room there?" But Johnny's pride was hurt! "Indeed not," he said, "what do you take me

for? I sit beside Francis? That would be an insult!" There was a real Pharisee hidden in Johnny's soul. In his pride he looked down upon poor Francis with the same contempt that the proud Pharisee had for the poor publican. You see now that I was right when I said: There are Pharisees even among children! Not only among the boys, but among the girls as well. Or isn't Anne Elizabeth a Pharisee? Her mother said to her the other day: "Anne Elizabeth, you are so stubborn and lazy that it is high time for you to mend your ways!" What did this little Pharisee say? She felt sorely offended, as if she had suffered a great wrong, and declared: "I am behaving well enough, if only the others were as good as I am!" O you little Pharisee! You believe yourself perfect, and yet have many, many faults!

What are the thoughts of such a child while listening to a sermon in church? They are exactly the thoughts which the Pharisees had when they listened to John. "What the priest says in his sermon is not for me, it is for those in front of me or behind me. For me such a sermon would be quite unnecessary!"

2

Dear children! By this time, I presume, you have discovered that there is a little Pharisee also in your souls,—nay, perhaps even a big one. Therefore I have to ask you another very important question: "What does St. John the Baptist demand of a Pharisaical child?"

He calls to you: "Brood of vipers, . . . bring forth fit fruit of repentance!" In other words: "*Drive that Pharisee out of your heart!* Soon it will be Christmas, and the Infant Jesus will want to come into your heart. Do you think He will like to come to you while a fat Pharisee is living in your soul? Jesus does not care to sit beside a Pharisee. Therefore, out with him! Anne Elizabeth must cease to regard herself as a good girl without any faults, even though her mother has reason to find fault with her. And Johnny must no longer look with contempt upon other children, whom he considers less bright and who cannot afford such expensive clothes as his. The Christ Child cares nothing for conceited, Pharisaical children. Therefore, remember the admonition of St. John: "Do penance, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

I will finish this sermon with a little story. A girl, called Emma, looked forward with great joy to Christmas. All her thoughts were concentrated on the coming of the Holy Child, and she could hardly talk about anything else. One night she dreamed that the Infant Jesus promised her He would soon come to her from Heaven. "But how shall I receive Him?" she thought. After considering the matter for a while, she said: "I will build a house of pure gold for dear little Jesus." But it seemed to her as if her guardian angel bent over her and said: "My dear child! Jesus does not ask for a house of gold. There is one place above all others where he loves to dwell, and that is the pure heart of a child."

You can learn a great lesson from this story. You

should prepare a beautiful place for the Infant Jesus. It need not be a house of gold, but it should be a pure and humble heart. Therefore, cast the proud Pharisee out of your heart forever, and the Infant Jesus will love to come to you. Amen.

4. THE LAST CALL OF THE PRECURSOR

(Fourth Sunday of Advent)

“All flesh shall see the salvation of God.” (Luke III, 6.)

MY dear children! To-day St. John the Baptist announces for the last time the approach of our Divine Saviour. For the last time he calls on us to prepare the way of the Lord. Get ready now, he says, Jesus is near. But a few more nights and you will be standing with the shepherds before the crib to behold the sweet little Babe of Bethlehem.

How would you wish to appear before the Infant Jesus? With empty hands? Or would you not rather have some gift to offer him, like the shepherds and the wise men of old? Of course you cannot give him bread and milk like the shepherds, nor gold and frankincense like the Magi, first, because you have not got these things, and then because the Divine Child is no longer among us in the same way as in the stable of Bethlehem. Sixteen hundred years ago St. Jerome, a very pious and learned man, was kneeling at midnight on Christmas in the stable at Bethlehem where the Saviour was born. His heart was filled with joy as he recalled the holy night in which the Son of God

came down upon earth as a helpless child, leaving Heaven with all its joys to make his abode among men. As he thought of all this, and remembered that Jesus acted thus out of love for mankind, he exclaimed with holy enthusiasm: "O Divine Child! Thou hast loved me so much; how shall I love thee in return? What can I do for thee? I will give thee all I possess!" The Divine Child answered: "Heaven and earth are mine, I do not need your riches." St. Jerome asked again: "Do you want my wisdom, my knowledge, all the books I have written?" The child smilingly shook His head and answered: "I am the eternal Truth and do not need your wisdom." "But what is there that I could give you?" cried the Saint. The Child answered: "Give me your heart!"

Yes, give your heart to the Infant Jesus! Oh, how pleased He will be to find growing in the garden of your soul the bitter but wholesome herb of self-denial and self-control, planted there by St. John on the first Sunday of Advent! Oh, how gratified He will be to find you obedient to that strict master who in time of temptation admonishes you: "You must not do this!" How pleased He will be when you have resisted the tempter and followed the voice of your conscience! How He will rejoice to find no longer that proud and haughty Pharisee strutting about in your heart, but to see in his place the bright and lovely angel of charity, gathering from the garden of your heart blossoms and fruits for the comfort of the poor and the sick, such as: kind and holy thoughts and prayers, little courtesies and services you render to others, especially

to the old and feeble, and all the other mortifications and duties you have performed in your everyday life. When He sees your heart turned into a paradise, He will be glad to make his abode there.

"If only my heart were such a paradise!" some of you will think. Fred blushed for shame when I spoke about the bright angel of charity. I know why! He made fun of two of his classmates because their mothers are so poor that they must accept help from the St. Vincent de Paul Society. And Antony drooped his head when I spoke of the bitter herb of self-control. His mother forbade him to receive Holy Communion because he struck his brother in a fit of anger on the very morning he was to approach the Holy Table. The first communicants were strangely affected when I spoke of the beautiful garden of the soul. They remembered the last instruction in which the priest showed them what condition their hearts were in.

Some of you may think: "For four weeks I have listened to the sermons on penance, and I am not a bit better. Surely I cannot offer to the Divine Child this sinful heart of mine!" If this be so, my dear children, you have all the more reason to approach the crib contritely and to say to the Infant Jesus: "Look here, my dear Saviour; St. John the Baptist with all his sermons could not make an impression on me; now you take my heart and make it holy!"

You need not be afraid. Just come to Jesus with all your sins. He loves sinners. Listen to this touching story:

A bright young girl had somehow lost her faith in

early youth and had followed the godless ways of the world for a number of years. Now Christmas eve had come again. Everyone in the house in which she lived was making preparations that night to get to the Christmas Mass the next morning. Helen had not seen the inside of a church for some time. Christmas for her was an ordinary, dreary workday like any other day of the year. Deep down in her heart, it is true, she had always at this season felt a secret longing for the church in its bright Christmas splendor and for the joyful Christmas hymns, but her stubbornness would not permit her to go to church even on this most sacred day of the year. To-day, too, this longing, somewhat akin to homesickness, troubled her soul. Devoid of rest and peace, she threw herself upon her bed and peered into the darkness. Again and again she would ask herself if there could be for her a revival of the faith of her innocent childhood, a return to the Infant Saviour in the crib. "Alas," she thought, "my sins will forever block the way to the crib!" As she was lost in thought there came to her ears the sweet strains of the hymn: "Silent night, holy night,"—awakening in her heart memories of her childhood days, when she too used to sing this hymn. Weary unto death, she fell asleep at last and had a strange dream. It seemed to her that she was in the stable of Bethlehem with the shepherds and the magi. All had something to give to the Christ Child except herself. She stood there with empty hands and clothes all soiled and torn. Her feet were tired and sore from the long and arduous journey. She fell upon her knees

before the Divine Infant, who lovingly and tenderly looked into her troubled face, and hesitatingly addressed Him as follows: "Dear Jesus, my hands are empty; I have nothing to give you. I will go right back again. I just came hither in my great misery to see your sweet and lovely face for a few moments." "No, no," said the Divine Child, "do not be in such a hurry, but stay a while! What about that load that weighs so heavily upon your shoulders? Give it to me as a Christmas present!" The girl sadly answered: "Alas, sweet Child, they are my sins, I dare not give them to you." "That is just what I want," replied the little Jesus, "give them to me! You certainly can not refuse me this wish on my birthday. I came into the world to take this heavy burden from you." The girl then offered her load to the Infant Jesus, who accepted it with outstretched hands. When she saw a bloody mark in those little hands, she understood. Although overjoyed that her sins were taken from her, she wept bitterly at the sight of this sign of the Saviour's love in His little hands. The next morning she was the first one in church. When, after a good confession, she received the Divine Child in Holy Communion and gave Him her heart as a Christmas present, amid tears of love and sorrow, she understood the meaning of her dream and at last felt joyful and happy again.

Dear children! Do you understand the deep meaning of this dream? Give your heart to the Infant Jesus on Christmas morn—even though it is a heart full of sin. If you come to Him in love and sorrow and with a good will, the Divine Infant will help you. Give

your heart to Jesus! He will dwell in it and make it like His own. Amen.

MARY CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN

(Feast of the Immaculate Conception)

DEAR children! Way up on a high mountain in Switzerland, called Rigi, there is a Capuchin monastery with a shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Year after year thousands ascend to the top of the Rigi either on the cogwheel railway or on foot. What is it that attracts them? They want to witness the rising of the sun as seen from the mountain.

Nature is still wrapt in darkness. The precipitous ascent is slow and difficult, not without danger, along rushing torrents and over steep abysses. Only a few stars send their dim light down on the wanderers. Very soon, however, the darkness disappears. The sky in the east first grows grey, then purple, then red, like fire. Now the tops of the neighboring mountains appear: Jungfrau, Eiger, Monk, Toedi, and many others covered with eternal snow. A minute later the first sunbeams shoot forth. Another minute and a half and then the sun shines all over the Alps, his radiance transfiguring everything into purest gold. Oh, how lovely is this dawn of a new day! The sun, in the brightness of the morning, rising higher and higher in the clear blue sky like a mighty conqueror over the dark night, brilliant and radiant in his triumphant course.

Why do I describe this scene, which no one who saw it can ever forget? What has it to do with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which we celebrate to-day, and with the season of Advent, in which we are now living?

Dear children, there was once a night, a fearfully dark night in the hearts of men. It was the night of paganism. Few people at that time knew anything of the one true God, who is our Father in Heaven. The great majority lived wicked and godless lives. They adored the fire, the sun, the moon, the stars, nay, even beasts, such as oxen, cows, and snakes. Some of them worshipped trees and lifeless stones. They made for themselves idols of gold and silver and clay and built temples in their honor; and, most cruel thought of all, they offered their own children as a sacrifice to these false gods.

This was the deep, awful night of paganism, which still holds in its grip large portions of the people of Africa and Asia and other parts of the world. It was the whole world's great Advent. Only a few stars shone forth to guide the people through the night of darkness and sin. They were those great and holy men whom Almighty God called forth out of the shadow of death, to whom He revealed Himself, whom He enlightened and guided during the centuries before Christ. Think of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, David, Solomon, and the great prophets, Jonas, Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, and Daniel, down to John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, who pointed his finger at the Saviour, saying: "Behold the lamb of

God, behold him who taketh away the sins of the world!" Oh, how these noble souls watched and longed for the dawn of day! How fervently they prayed and cried: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a saviour!" Then all of a sudden, hundreds of years before the coming of Christ, Isaiah cried out: "*Ecce virgo*—Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, that is, God with us!" He saw in spirit the morning star in all its glory, the fair aurora of our coming redemption. It was Mary in her immaculate conception. This great mystery was the first ray of hope from the everlasting hills, the dawn of a new day, announcing the coming of the sun of justice, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Whence the beauty and splendor and subtle charm of the early dawn? From the sun and from the sun alone. So it is with Mary, the mother of Jesus. Whence her grace, her beauty, her purity and freedom from all, even original, sin? Only from her Divine Son, Jesus Christ, who is the radiant sun in the eternal sky. This truth is beautifully expressed in the Introit of to-day's Mass, where Mary exclaims in an outburst of joy: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, and with a robe of justice he has covered me, as a bride adorned with her jewels. I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast upheld me, and hast not made my enemies to rejoice over me!"

The Immaculate Virgin is the masterpiece of the

triune God. The garment of sanctifying grace transfigures her soul. Hence, the salutation of the angel: "*Ave Maria, gratia plena*—Hail Mary, full of grace." The sanctity and justice wherewith God clothed our first parents in Paradise adorn the spouse of the Holy Ghost, the mother of God the Son, the daughter of our Heavenly Father. Our Immaculate Mother is clothed with heavenly beauty, resplendent with the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the three divine virtues, perfect in heart, mind, and body. She is the fair one, compared to whom all beauty is pale and dim. The devil, elated over the fall of our first mother, Eve, has no cause to-day to rejoice, because Mary has crushed his head under her feet.

Thus God during the first Advent prepared the world for His coming by the glorious aurora of the Immaculate Conception. So beautiful a home did God the Father prepare for His beloved Son! So magnificently did He adorn the sacred tabernacle wherein His only Son should dwell until the rising of the sun, that is, until his sacred birth at Christmas. Hence the words of the prophet: "Darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

Dear children! The glory of God shall also be seen upon you this coming Christmas. Therefore, you must now lay aside the works of darkness and walk as children of light. A sincere confession and worthy Communion during Advent is the best preparation for Christmas. Pray to Mary Immaculate to help you. Remember that she was pure, free from sin, and

strong in the battle against evil. To be pure and strong in resisting sin, this should be your resolution in Advent. Amen.

COMING OF THE DIVINE CHILD INTO THIS WORLD

(*Christmas*)

DEAR children! At last Christmas has come, the loveliest and most joyful of all the feasts of the year. You have been preparing for it during the four weeks of Advent. You have been thinking of it and dreaming about it. Hence it is but natural that to-day all your thoughts and desires should center upon the dear Christ Child. I will tell you *how the Infant Jesus came into this world*.

- I. *The Christ Child came in great poverty;*
- II. *But also in great glory,*
- III. *And above all in exceeding great love.*

I

Dear children! The first thing you looked for when you entered the church this morning was the crib, and seeing it, you thought: "Ah, but isn't the crib lovely and beautiful!" And I know there is not one of you here present who will not go up to the crib to-day or to-morrow to visit the Infant Jesus and His beloved mother with St. Joseph and the shepherds with their sheep. And rightly so. You can learn much here. Above all you can see how poor and needy Jesus was

when He came into the world. Poor and rickety was the stable in which He was born; poor the manger into which He was laid upon hay and straw; poor were the swaddling clothes in which Mary wrapped Him; poor were also Mary and Joseph, who knelt in adoration beside the manger. How plain and modest were Mary's garments! How callous St. Joseph's hands from arduous toil! As a poor infant did Jesus come from Heaven into this world. Surely every good child will feel sympathy for this poor child, who had no home, no bed, no cradle other than the hard manger in the cold and tumble-down stable of Bethlehem.

2

Christ came into this world in bitter poverty; but he came also in wondrous glory. Some of you will think: "Look about as I may in the stable of Bethlehem, I can see nothing of this glory!" Let me tell you: Heaven and earth were set in motion on the first Christmas night on account of this poor little Child of Bethlehem!

Heaven was set in motion. Let us in spirit cross the fields of Bethlehem and join the shepherds watching over their flock. It is night. The stars shine brightly from the cloudless sky. Oh, it is so peaceful and quiet round about! But suddenly a bright light flares up in the sky, Heaven opens, and a chorus of angels floats forth into the air. One swiftly descends to the shepherds in the field. Listen to his joyful message: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to

all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." (Luke II, 10-12). Hardly had the angel announced his message, when the angelic chorus above burst forth in jubilation, singing the praise of God: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will!"

Why did Heaven on this holy night give up its inhabitants? Why did the angels descend to Bethlehem's fields to chant the first *Gloria in excelsis Deo*? Solely for the sake of the poor Child lying in the manger. Hence what I told you is true! The Christ Child was born in glory. All Heaven was set in motion for His sake!

But the earth, too, was astir for the sake of the Divine Infant! Dear children! At the time when our Saviour was born, there reigned in Rome a mighty emperor, Augustus, to whom almost the entire world then known was subject. This mighty ruler wanted to know how many people lived in his realm. He sent messengers into every country, announcing that a census would be taken up. You can imagine great masses of people moving to and fro in cities and in the country in obedience to the Emperor's decree. In the Holy Land all the people had to travel to the city of their fathers in order to be enrolled. Why all this excitement, why this moving sea of humanity just at this time? For the reason that the word of the prophet might be fulfilled, who foretold that the Saviour of the

world would be born in Bethlehem! In order that the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, who were living at Nazareth, should be in Bethlehem at the time of the birth of our Divine Saviour, Providence brought it about that Cæsar Augustus decreed a census. The earth, therefore, with its vast millions of people was in motion for the sake of the Christ Child. Truly, then, we must admit: In great glory and triumph the Christ Child made His entry into this world. Heaven and earth were astir for His sake! Oh, dear children, if Heaven and earth paid homage to the Divine Infant, then we, too, must worship Him. Let us kneel down at the crib of this poor Child and with the shepherds devoutly adore Him!

3

However, not only in great poverty, not only in wonderful glory did the Christ Child come into this world, but also in exceeding great love.

My dear children! There is a beautiful story about "Poor Henry," which has always deeply impressed me. He was a great and powerful knight who had fallen victim to the dreadful disease of leprosy. His body was covered with sores like that of poor Lazarus, who lay at the rich man's gate. He felt very unhappy, thinking within himself: "There is but one thing left for me, and that is to die!" One day he was told that in Salerno there were skillful doctors who could cure him. At once he started out for the beautiful land of Italy, to consult those famous doctors. What advice did they

give him? They said: "There is no cure for you; you have to die. The only thing that could restore your health would be a transfusion of the blood of an innocent child." Now the poor man was still more unhappy. "I surely must die," he said to himself, "who would ever give his blood for me?" Upon his return home he nevertheless inquired throughout the land if there were perchance an innocent child who would be willing to give his blood for him, so that he might be cured. And lo and behold! a poor farmer's daughter offered her blood for the sick man, and Henry was cured.

Dear children! Let me give a deeper meaning to this story. The poor sick knight covered over and over with wounds is mankind covered with the leprosy of sin. Like Poor Henry, mankind could not be cured except by the blood of an innocent child. You all know who this innocent Child is, who gave His blood for us poor sinful creatures. It is the Christ Child of Bethlehem. With what great love has this Child loved us! With how great a love must we love this Child in return, since He came upon this earth to die for us, so that we might live! O dear children! Go now in spirit to the stable of Bethlehem and behold the Divine Child lying in the manger! Fix your eyes on those little hands! They wish to be pierced by cruel nails and fastened to the cross for love of us. Look at the Child's tender feet! They want to walk themselves tired and sore searching for sinners, and, in the end, like the little hands, they want to be pierced and nailed to the cross. The Christ Child's heart longs to be pierced by the lance, so that the last drop of His blood may be

shed for us! What wonderful love! Whoever does not love this Divine Child, must have a heart of stone!

Dear children! Though there may be people in this world who hate the Christ Child, we at least will love Him. We will consecrate to Him our whole heart and soul. Daily we will try to learn more and more of His great love for us. We love this dear Child who came from Heaven in such bitter poverty, who made His entry into this world amid such wondrous glory, who from Heaven's bright splendor descended into this squalid valley of tears to shed His precious blood for us on the cross and thus lift us out of the shadow of death into the brightness of everlasting life. Amen.

WHAT IS GOING TO BECOME OF YOU?

(Sunday within the Octave of Christmas)

My dear children! When the angels sang the *Gloria*, when the shepherds and the Magi came to adore the Holy Child and to offer Him their gifts, Mary, His Mother, standing beside the manger, no doubt repeatedly asked herself: "What shall become of this wonderful Child, what shall become of my dear Jesus?" It is true the angel at the Annunciation granted her a glimpse into the future. She knew that her Son was to be the Redeemer of the world. But she knew this in a vague and dim manner only, not how it was to be accomplished and what was to be her own share in the work of the Redemption. Only too soon, however, was

she to know and understand. When she brought her Child into the Temple and presented Him to the Lord, Simeon, an old and God-fearing man, took the infant Jesus into his arms and glorified and thanked God that the Saviour of the world was born. Then he gave Mary, the Mother of Jesus, a clear answer to the question: "What shall become of Him?" He told her that a sword of grief would pierce her soul and that she, as the Mother of Sorrows, would have to walk with her Son the thorny path of the cross for the Redemption of the human race.

Dear children! Every mother, when standing at the cradle of her child will, like the Mother of God, think of the future and ask herself: "What shall become of my child?" We can give a clear answer to this question without being a prophet like Simeon. You will be:

- I. *What your mother makes of you,*
- II. *What you make of yourself, and*
- III. *What God makes of you.*

I

My dear children! A great artist has painted a picture of the Mother of God, one of the finest I have ever seen. Mary is seated, looking with love and sorrow at the Infant on her lap and showing Him a beautiful rose in full bloom. Delighted, the Child eagerly stretches out His little hands towards the rose. Gazing at the picture for a little while, you will notice how gladly the Mother of Jesus would give her Child all the tender love within her heart, all the beauty and

joy in the world, knowing only too well what terrible sufferings await him.

My dear child! That picture of the Mother of God is a picture of every mother, your mother included. Without being a seeress, every mother knows what life has in store for her child and that she will often be sorrowful in her solicitude for you. She knows how the burden of life will weigh heavily upon you in later years; how dangers and hardships and sorrows will surround you on every side. Therefore, like the Mother of God in the picture, she often held you in her arms when you were a baby, giving you whatever her warm heart could offer of affection and love, filling your childhood years with sunshine and happiness. Her cradle songs, the playthings she gave you, and the thousand and one objects with which her mother's love surrounded you, were intended only to bring you joy and happiness and banish pain and sadness, so far as this was possible. And since all sorrow comes from the evil of sin, she tries to keep away from you whatever is ugly and sinful and detestable. She wants your innocent eyes to behold only what is beautiful and your ears to hear only what is good and true. She knows that every good or bad word you hear is like a grain of seed falling into your young soul, where it will quicken unto life and sooner or later bear fruit, good or bad, according as the seed has been good or bad. In short, she knows that, essentially, *you will be in later life what she is making of you now.*

And because not every child is like the Infant Jesus, of whom it was said: "He grew in age and wisdom and

grace before God and men;" because a child, in spite of his mother's love, is often whimsical and peevish and does not understand how well the mother means it, therefore, in loving solicitude, she helps the child along at times to do only those things that make for happiness, administering, if necessary, bitter medicine, sometimes the only remedy at hand,—punishment. Then, of course, the picture of the happy mother playing with her child changes into that of a sorrowful mother, because the heart of every good mother is sad when she has to punish her child and her heart bleeds while she does it. But she knows it is better for her heart to bleed a little now, when the child is still young, than to bleed unto death in later life, when, through want of proper home-training, the child will suffer shipwreck. The thoughtful ones among you ought to see that a punishing mother has more love for her child than a mother who humors, pampers and flatters.

2

You see, dear children, how grateful you should be to God if you have a good and strict mother! It depends largely on her what you will be after you are grown up. On whom else does it depend? *On your own self. You will be what you make of yourself.* At your age you should grow in understanding and wisdom like the Infant Jesus. You should try to understand that whatever your parents, priests, and teachers ask of you, is meant for your own good. Hence, you should always willingly and cheerfully do what you are told

to do. The older you get, the more you must take your training into your own hands. In school, in religious instructions, and at the children's Mass you are told how to go about it. Nowadays we go to a lot of trouble for you children. This was not so formerly. You have special services on Sunday, the children's Mass with a sermon for the children. No wonder that the older people often say: The children of to-day are to be envied. But all the fine sermons which we preach to you will do you no good if you do not apply in everyday life the truths you hear and put into practice the things you are told. If you will not learn to be diligent and industrious while young, if you will not strive after self-control, goodness, piety, courage, and all the other virtues, you will hardly be able in later life to acquire these virtues, which are so essential for happiness in this valley of tears. What you neglect now in your training, you will never be able to make up for in future. What you make of yourself now by your own efforts, that you will be in later life.

3

You will be what your mother makes out of you and what you make out of yourself. But, try as you may, the two of you alone will never succeed except with the help of God. *You will be what God makes of you.* The farmer can plough and plant and water his fields, but if God does not give quickening sunshine, all labor is in vain. The human plant needs the grace of God just as much as the grass and the flowers in the

field need the sunlight. The rays of the divine sun of grace penetrate your soul, my child, bringing to life all that is good in you. And this takes place every time you pray, every time you assist at Holy Mass, and above all, every time you receive your Saviour in Holy Communion. It is then that He, the Lord of life, comes to form and shape your heart as He wants it, provided you are ready and willing. What the Divine Saviour can do with a child you can see from the lives of the Saints. Just think of little Tarsicius, of St. Agnes, of the great sinner St. Augustine, who through the prayers of his mother and the grace of the Saviour, became one of the greatest of Saints.

Do you know now, my dear child, what you will be when you grow up? You will be what your mother makes of you, what you make of yourself, and what God makes of you. You have a good and loving mother, who has done and is still doing her very best to make a good Christian out of you. Probably she has but one fault, that she is too lenient at times, that she cannot do violence to herself and punish you when you deserve it. Should this be the case, then pray hard to-day for a whipping, a sound whipping, whenever you deserve it.

As a rule a mother does all she can. But what about you? To-day is the last Sunday of the year. What did you make of yourself during the past year? What use did you make of its days, weeks, and months? Have you, perhaps, been like the man who, walking along the seashore, found a bag full of pebbles and thoughtlessly flung them one by one into the sea until,

holding the last one in his hand, he noticed that they were all precious diamonds? Each day of the year is a precious jewel; therefore do not throw it away! Looking back over the past year, must you not admit that you have lost a good many precious stones? What have you made of yourself? Has there been some improvement at least in your behavior? Have you advanced, like the Child Jesus, in age and wisdom and grace before God and men? Now, do not lose courage if you have not made progress, but humbly say to the Christ Child at the Elevation this morning: "O beloved Saviour! During this coming year I will do better. My good mother will do all she can, and I will try my very best in the new year; the rest, of course, *you* have to do, and with your help I know I shall be a good and virtuous child of God in the new year." And that is what I sincerely wish you all. Amen.

WISHES AND ROADS TO HAPPINESS FOR THE NEW YEAR

(New Year's Day)

MY dear children! In the name of Jesus and from all my heart I wish you all a Happy New Year!

Last night, as the clock struck twelve, you heard the church bell toll a sad farewell to the old year and then change its mournful tune into the joyous melody of a cradle-song for the new year. You heard the merry voices of the people everywhere, wishing one another happiness and good luck in the new year. To-day, as you walk along the streets, you hear the same wish

over and over again: "Happy New Year!" Everybody seems happy to-day. Happiness is what each one of us, deep down in his heart, wishes for himself; what each one hopes for with beaming eyes and expectant heart, just as you children have waited for Santa Claus. Each heart to-day is full of good wishes for self and others! Let us examine these New Year wishes a little more closely and, instead of building air-castles, as so many do, let us try to find the road leading to true happiness in the new year.

What are your wishes for yourself on New Year's Day? During the past week I had the consolation of giving the last Sacraments to an old man. When I told him he could now look forward to the new year without fear, let it bring what it may, the old man, with the snow of eighty winters upon his head, interrupted me, saying: "But I want to live a little longer,—just another short year!" That was the good man's New Year's wish.

If this old man, stooped and wrinkled, the fire in his eyes almost extinguished, his countenance pale and worn, still clings to life like that, what then must be the wishes and desires of the young regarding life? Take the young graduate in the prime of health and youth;—what is his dream of life and liberty, standing before his soul like a picture overhung with a veil of mystery? His only wish, his only desire is to win and conquer that happiness that stands before his vision, endowed with all the lovely charms of a fairy dream.

And the children just beginning school! Their only

dream is the dream of their First Communion day. Their heart's desire is expressed in the prayer of the First Communion hymn:

"Jesus, Jesus come to me,
Oh, how much I long for thee!
Comfort my poor soul distressed,
Come and dwell within my breast!"

Little folks, too, have wishes of their own. A millionaire could easily fulfill a whole carload of such New Year wishes.

Will the new year fulfill all these wishes for happiness? For many it would not be a good thing if their wishes were realized. For that reason God crosses out quite a few items on our list of wishes. The word happiness itself, however, He leaves because He has created the human heart to be happy. But since true happiness depends as much on us as it does on God, whosoever would be happy, must choose the right road to happiness. That road is the road of duty as it is marked out for us by the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. The Ten Commandments with their inexorable "*thou shalt*"—" *thou shalt not*," are, so to speak, the sign-posts to happiness, and whosoever travels God's roads, will be happy both in this world and in the next. The child who says his daily prayers, who is obedient, goes to Mass on Sundays, keeps peace with other children, avoids constant fights and quarrels, the child who can look his parents and pastor straight in the eye because he has a clean heart and shuns evil, the child who need not fear any one

because he is honest and truthful—that child is always happy!

My dear children! You must take after the Child Jesus! If you follow Him and advance in wisdom and grace and favor before God and men, as you grow up, you will be good and happy. This must be your programme for the new year. In the name of Jesus, and after His example, walk the road which Jesus has walked, and you will be on the way to happiness, in this world and in the next.

My dear children! To walk in the ways of God from the first day of the year to the last, never to lose or idle away a single day, that should be your earnest resolution for the new year. Good wishes will remain empty if we do not follow the road to happiness unswervingly.

My dear children! Every day of the new year, every day of your life, is like a precious stone. And every day which is spent idly resembles a lost jewel. But every day on which you do God's will and obey your parents will become a precious jewel in your crown of glory in Heaven. Would that throughout the new year, when reciting our night prayers at the close of each day and looking over the day's work, we should never have to say to ourselves: "I have lost a jewel, I have lost a day!" No, on the contrary, would that we could say with a good conscience every night: "This day has added another jewel to my crown of glory!" The new year will then become another rung on the ladder leading upward to everlasting happiness. Amen.

HOW TO BECOME A LITTLE MISSIONARY

(Feast of the Epiphany)

MY dear boys and girls! Ever since Christmas day the crib has been the center of attraction in this church for you. At any hour of the day for the last two weeks one could see children standing before it, gazing with pious curiosity at the Christ Child, at Mary and Joseph kneeling beside the manger, and at all the rest of the well-known figures. This morning you behold three new figures with the Holy Family. They are visitors from far-away countries, the three Magi or wise men. Those three men were pagans and a wonderful star called them to the crib. Jesus wanted all men to know that He had come into the world for the heathen as well as for the Jews. There are still millions of heathens all over the world, and the Holy Child has the same love for them that he had for the three wise men; He wants them all to come to Him and be saved. No doubt it is your sincere wish that a bright star, such as that which guided the wise men from the East, should also guide the pagans of to-day to the Saviour. But that is no longer the way in which Jesus calls men to His crib. He wishes missionaries to go among them and preach the faith to them, so that, following its light, they may come to Him and be saved. And He desires us all to help the missionaries in their work. I am sure that you want to do your share in saving the heathen who are still sitting in the shadow of death,

in a word, that you want to be little missionaries. To encourage you in this, let me tell you something about the Association of the Holy Childhood and about the misery of the heathen.

About a hundred years ago there lived in the city of Nancy, France, a saintly bishop, who was greatly troubled by the fact that in many countries of Africa, India, Australia, and even America, there were so many children who knew nothing about the Infant Jesus. Hence he resolved to train missionaries to convert the pagans. But he could do little because he had no money. One day this thought came to him: "Christian children must help the heathen children; all Catholic children must become little missionaries!" He figured out that if every child would give only 3 or 5 cents each month, enough money could be raised to build big mission houses, to train a large number of missionaries, and to ransom many heathen children. Hence, he ordered the teachers in the class-room and the preachers in the pulpit of his diocese to tell the children all about these heathen children. The little ones became interested, and many of them wanted to help. They formed a children's mission-circle and called it "Association of the Holy Childhood." This was in 1843. Soon Catholic children all over the world became enthusiastic members. In 1908 about 40 million dollars had already been collected. Thus you see what children can accomplish. You American children ought to march in the front rank, you should not let yourselves be excelled by children in other countries who are not as well off as you are, but who nevertheless con-

tribute liberally to this mission fund. Can you imagine how much has been accomplished and what blessings have come to the heathen children through the pennies of the members of this Association? How much ignorance, misery and distress has been lifted from them with this money contributed entirely by children!

In London people witnessed an unusual sight one day. Multitudes gathered and crowded the streets so that one could scarcely move on. All hurried to a certain show window. What was to be seen there? Those who were lucky enough to get a glance at the window, turned away deeply moved. A touching scene was pictured there. It showed a crude mission hut in which lay a dying man upon a ragged cot. His hands were rotting off with leprosy, his whole body was putrid with this dreadful disease. Who was this man? Father Damian Deveuster, the famous missionary, who of his own accord had left his native land and his parents to go to the Island of Molokai, peopled by exiled lepers. Nobody wanted to have anything to do with these outcasts. Father Damian, following the example of our Divine Saviour, went out to serve these poorest of the poor. He knew well enough that some day he himself would fall a prey to the terrible disease and that he would die an outcast, alone and forsaken by all. Yet he made this tremendous sacrifice out of love for our Divine Saviour and for those whom he desired to win for Heaven.

Seeing such heroic deeds, the heathen could not but understand that the Catholic faith was something very different from their own superstition. A well-known

missionary who, like Father Damian, had for years nursed the sick and cared for the lepers in heathen countries, told a large congregation how those unhappy creatures, cast out by their own kindred, after he had washed and cleansed their malodorous ulcers and sores, would ask in astonishment: "What prompts you to come to our rescue, when father and mother, brother and sister, have abandoned us?" When the missionary responded: "I do this because my faith teaches me to do so and God wishes it," they would exclaim: "Oh, teach us this wonderful faith, which makes men so good; teach us to know that God who has such heroic followers!"

My dear children! Like those poor sick lepers, millions of pagans call on us in distress to-day: "Oh, teach us your consoling faith that makes men so good and generous, teach us to know your God, who has such heroic followers!" People in heathen lands to-day seem to be awakening from a long, dreary slumber and looking forward to a new and better religion. Their superstitious practices no longer satisfy them. Hence to us is addressed more than ever the last command of our dear Saviour: "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature!" Many of you have heard in your history class about the Mohammedans. You know they have a false religion, because Mohammed was a false prophet. And now listen: These Mohammedans are at present educating 40,000 preachers, whom they intend to send to India in order to convert the entire population of that country to their false religion. Just imagine, 40,000 preachers,—

what a gigantic army for the spreading of heresy! And in our own country zealous members of the different Protestant sects have formed a "Students' Volunteer Movement," which intends to send 25,000 missionaries into the foreign mission field. What zeal for the spread of heresy!

My dear children! May we Catholics sit idly by and look on? Must we not do all we can in order to send a great number of missionaries of the true faith into this large mission field as soon as possible? To this end, my dear children, all Catholics, you children included, must become missionaries. You are such already as members of the Association of the Holy Childhood. This association does not send you to India or Africa to preach to the heathen, but you contribute to and pray daily for the missions. You should pray particularly that God may call many good boys and girls to be missionary priests and brothers and missionary sisters in heathen lands. Healthy, pious and courageous boys, who are ready to face the jungle with its dangers, are the ones best fitted for this kind of work. I am sure that from among our boys one or the other will some day become a brave missionary, and from among our girls some will become missionary sisters, instructing heathen children and nursing the sick in pagan countries. If you feel called by God to this noble and beautiful vocation, pray fervently that you may remain good and pious, practice self-denial in some little thing every day, so that you may be able later on to bear the hardships inseparable from the missionary life.

But you can do even more than this. In some places you find before the crib a mite box with the inscription: "For poor heathen children." Whenever you can, drop a penny or two into it. How edifying it is to see the bigger children leading their smaller brothers and sisters to the crib to let them drop a coin in the mite box for the missions! Others are still more generous. They save their pennies, nickels, and dimes all the year round and put them into the mite box which is permanently set up at school.

Those among you who have not done much for the missions so far, should make the firm resolution: From now on I will do for the missions what I can. Even after you have left school, do not forget the missions. When you earn your own money later on, you will be better able to help and by becoming members of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith you will develop from little missionaries into big missionaries.

My dear children! As you gaze to-day at the bright star which guided the three wise men to the stable of Bethlehem, think and say: "O Holy Infant, like this blessed star, which guided the wise men to Thy crib, we will make the bright star of the true faith shine forth in heathen countries. We are but children, but we will do all we can, so that you, O most Holy Child, will be able to send big missionaries in our stead to the missions. This holy resolution shall be the gift which we offer you together with the gifts of the three wise men. Let our gifts also be gold, frankincense, and myrrh in your eyes, our little savings and our humble prayers, both offered in self-denial and holy zeal for

the salvation of poor heathen children. Accept it, O dearest Saviour, and bless us all, that out of our number of little missionaries the one or the other may some day by your grace go forth as a big missionary. Amen.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN AT THE CHILDREN'S MASS

(First Sunday after Epiphany)

"The child Jesus remained in Jerusalem . . . they found him in the temple." (Luke II, 43, 46.)

MY dear children! I would like to ask you a question. Are you glad to come to the children's Mass? You nod your head, and I suppose that means, Yes! At the same time you look surprised. Why this strange question?

The question came to me while reading to-day's Gospel. Is it not a beautiful story? The Boy Jesus, at the age of twelve, going for the first time with His parents on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem? For weeks He had been eagerly looking forward to this great day, although it was a journey of more than a week on foot from Nazareth to Jerusalem. The nights were most probably spent in the open air or in a cave. Would you not have been delighted to go with them? It is a real pleasure to see the wide-awake, sturdy, young boy, Jesus, marching at His parents' side, with radiant enthusiasm, rosy cheeks, and sparkling eyes, filled with one great thought: I am going to the house of my Heavenly Father!

You make a similar pilgrimage every Sunday; only your journey is much shorter and more comfortable. A short walk at most, and you are in your Jerusalem, in that beautiful temple of God—your parish church. There during the children's Mass you sing and pray so devoutly that it is a real pleasure to listen to you. And how beautiful and edifying it is to see also your parents attending Mass with you. Really, children, the children's Mass

- I. *Should be the happiest hour for you on Sundays,*
- II. *And therefore you should bring your parents with you.*

I

Little Henry wanted to act smart before his schoolmates and said: "I am going to the movies to-day!" "And I," boasted Charlie gleefully, "I am going out into the country with my father for a long auto ride." But Joe, a tiny youngster, exclaimed proudly: "And I am going to High Mass with my mother; that will be the best of all!" Little Joe was right, my dear children! That was the best thing he could do—go to church.

You ought to be proud, my dear children, to go to church on Sunday. The church is the most beautiful place on earth to go to. There is no place as grand and as beautiful as a Catholic church, where everything, the walls, the windows, the sanctuary lamp, and the altar, reminds us of God's presence in the tabernacle. It should fill your heart with joy and pride to be al-

lowed to come here into the presence of God. You should never be cross and ill-natured on Sunday morning, cutting long faces and groaning: "O God, do I *have* to go to church?" No, you should jump out of bed with a yell of joy: "Hurrah, to-day I *may* go to church!"

But you say: "At church I have to pray all the time, and to keep quiet. I may not move or talk or laugh, and Mass lasts so long and is so tiresome! Oh, I wish I were outside again!" If you really think that way, my dear children, you only show how stupid you are. Tell me, what do you do when you are not in church? You help your parents, you prepare your home task, you sit in school, you romp about and yell on the street, you play all kind of tricks, you annoy and pester people—it is a mixture of good and bad actions. And what should you do in church? *Pray!* Converse with God and sing beautiful hymns in His honor. A learned and holy man once said: "Man is never so venerable and noble as when he prays." A boy or girl kneeling in devout prayer, with face uplifted to our dear Saviour upon the altar, is like an angel in human form. Should you not be happy then to fulfill this your most sublime duty? It lasts only half an hour! Consider it well, my dear children, and I am sure you will speak differently.

Now turn your thoughts again to the Boy Jesus. Eight days He walked with His parents to reach the Temple, a wonderful example for you to imitate. You know well enough that it is the Child Jesus from whom you must learn what to do and what not to do. His is the best school for you throughout life. There are

little Negro children in Africa who travel for miles through the jungle and incur dangers from wild beasts, venomous serpents and bloodthirsty savages to get to a crude little mission chapel in order to take part in the divine service. And it is astonishing how gladly they make all these sacrifices! Would you have your little dark-skinned brothers and sisters put you to shame? You are white children and regard yourselves as the most enlightened on earth. And there are white children who are real heroes and Saints, who face a thousand obstacles and make great sacrifices to come to church, who receive a cruel beating and get nothing to eat when their parents find out that they have been to church. These children are little martyrs.

2

It is encouraging to see also your parents at the children's Mass. Parents and children kneeling in adoration at the feet of our Saviour truly form a holy family. Can you think of anything more beautiful, my dear children?

We always like to see your parents here. They should know what we say to you; they should pray and sing with you; they should see to it that you are devout and attentive! Perhaps you will not always like that, yet you should be glad that your parents take such an interest in you. Their presence is another reason why you should pay close attention to the sermon. Your father or mother might question you at home in order to find out whether or not you listened attentively to

what I said. Your parents will then also see to it that you put into practice the spiritual lessons and counsels we have given you. That, of course, is the principal thing. Be glad of it because it is your own greatest blessing and gain! Amen.

A MEDITATION ON HOLY COMMUNION

(Second Sunday after Epiphany)

My dear children! This is your Communion day. While I was thinking of what I should say to you this morning to assist you in your preparation for Holy Communion and to help you carry out your good resolutions, there stood suddenly before my imagination the picture of St. Christopher, whose medal is fastened in the center of the instrument board of my car. At once I knew what I should preach to you to-day. I was confirmed in my choice by the hope that you would be reminded of what I said to you this morning whenever you see this medal.

Who was St. Christopher? The medal represents him as a big man of giant strength, carrying a small boy on his shoulders. He stands almost knee-deep in water and, supported by a heavy stick, breasts the foaming waves that whirl around him. I am going to speak to you about this man to-day and show you the lesson you can learn from the story of his life. This giant lived in the land of Chanaan many, many years ago. Dissatisfied with himself and craving for adventure, he left his native land saying: "I will roam

through the whole world in search of the mightiest of kings, and be his servant." After long and wearisome wanderings and many fruitless inquiries, he came at last upon a hermit who, in noble charity to his fellow-men, guarded a dangerous passage across a violent stream, guiding the travellers to a place where they could cross with ease and safety. This humble man of God instructed the impetuous giant about our Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest and mightiest of all kings. "How can I serve this king?" inquired the giant. The holy hermit charged him to settle down near the stream and carry the travellers across on his shoulders. In that way he would serve the great king and please the Child Jesus. Offero (that was the giant's name) joyfully agreed to do it. One day he heard a soft, friendly voice calling from the opposite shore: "Offero, take me over!" Going over, he found a beautiful little boy with golden curls and rosy cheeks. Lifting him on his shoulders, Offero descended into the stream. But lo and behold, the water began to rise higher and higher and the turbulent waves roared and surged around him, while the boy on his shoulders grew heavier and heavier. Struggling against the rushing waters and gasping for breath, Offero cried out: "Child, how heavy you are! I feel as if I were carrying the whole world upon my shoulders." The little boy answered smilingly: "You carry more than the world, you carry Him who created heaven and earth." Saying these words he pressed Offero's head under the water and baptised him. Since then Offero is called Christopher or Christ-bearer.

My dear communicants! Each one of you will leave the church to-day as a Christopher, a Christ-bearer, even more so than the giant Offero. He carried the Child Jesus on his shoulders, while you carry him in your heart. Does it also happen to you at times that you have the same experience that Christopher had hundreds of years ago? In a little while, after the Elevation, you will hear, as it were, the gentle voice of the Child Jesus sweetly calling you: "Come, child, take me over into your heart!" And with fervent love you will go up and receive the Divine Child into your heart. After Mass you will leave the church with a light and joyous step, carrying your beloved Jesus out into the world. But the moment you step outside, a furious stream rushes in upon you, wild and whirling. It is the stream of life. This stream surges around you with its numerous temptations against the faith, against holy purity, temptations from within and from without, temptations from evil books, from obscene pictures, from corrupted children and sometimes even from parents, brothers, and sisters. O yes, dear children, life is a madly rushing stream and many a tempest-tossed wanderer is carried down into the whirlpool of vice and the gloomy, everlasting abyss of hell! When you grow older, when fierce temptations break in upon you like turbulent waves, when you are knocked about by wind and waves, then will you feel how hard it is to carry the Child Jesus across this stream. And many there are who will then, like St. Christopher of old, sigh under the burden which once seemed so sweet and light: "O child, how heavy you are!"

Yet, my dear children, we must go ahead on our journey across this madly rushing stream of life. We certainly want to reach the opposite shore, namely, the land of the blessed. But to that end we must carry the Child Jesus in our hearts or else we shall be driven back into the stream and perish in the dark, gloomy abyss. "How, then, can we manage to reach the other side in safety?" you ask. My answer is: *We must be giants like St. Christopher, giants not in body, but in will-power.* You are still young. Now is the time to develop your will-power and to cultivate a strong, firm character, so that in the most violent temptations you will have the strength and courage to say: "No, never!" like the little boy who said to his father who wanted to employ him in some evil deed: "Father, I cannot, I dare not do wrong, for I carry my God within me! I cannot do it, even if you would kill me!"

Natural strength, however, is not sufficient for this; we need supernatural energy. Whosoever would become a giant needs nourishing food. You know who gives us this food. He who said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever!" (John VI, 51.)

Dear children! There are a few boys and girls who still miss their monthly Communion. Think what these children will be in five or ten years from now! Without the aid of our Saviour, without the bread of the strong, you cannot remain virtuous.

St. Christopher carried a powerful staff to support himself in breasting the turbulent waves. This staff is confident prayer. Therefore pray, pray morning and

evening, pray especially in the hour of temptation! As children with a firm, steadfast will, nourished with the bread of the strong, supported with the staff of prayer, start across the wild, rushing stream of life and, like St. Christopher, you will safely reach the eternal shore.

PREPARATION FOR FIRST COMMUNION

(Third Sunday after Epiphany)

MY dear children! To-day's Gospel narrates a well-known incident. It pictures to us the respect and reverence of a Roman centurion for Jesus of Nazareth, the Saviour of mankind, so beautifully expressed in the humble words: "O Lord, I am not worthy." You repeat these same words every time you receive Holy Communion. Like the centurion, you feel unworthy that the Saviour should come and dwell under your roof. A similar longing for Jesus, but also a similar reverence for Him, is now surely felt by our first communicants. As they now, during the time of their preparation, frequently visit their dear friend in the Tabernacle, they will no doubt many a time speak thus to Jesus:

"O Lord, I am not worthy,
That Thou shouldst come to me.
But speak the word of comfort,
My spirit healed shall be.
And humbly I'll receive Thee,
The Bridegroom of my soul,
No more by sin to grieve Thee,
Or fly Thy sweet control!"

More than once will they exclaim: "Alas! would that my heart were prepared for that great day!" because they realize more and more from day to day that their hearts possess all too little of beauty for this great day, when Jesus comes to them for the first time. Hence, all must now help to get our dear first communicants well prepared. For this reason we have invited the parents to-day to talk over with them what we must do that our first communicants will become really good children before the day of their first Communion. We priests cannot accomplish it alone. And who do you think is to help us? We need:

- I. *The help of the first communicants themselves;*
- II. *We need the help of their parents and teachers;*
- III. *We need the help of all, small and large, we need the help of the whole parish.*

I

My dear first communicants! You yourselves must do the largest share of the work, since it is your hearts which are to be prepared as a tabernacle for our dear Saviour. Thank God, we can testify to-day before your parents and the whole parish that all of you, boys and girls, have made a good start and are showing the right spirit. One can see that you like to come to these instructions because you show such interest and attention that we scarcely notice how quickly the time flies, and the hour is over before we know it.

After all, it is only natural that you should be glad to come here because it is here that you learn to know

our dear Saviour, and those who once know Him well simply cannot help loving Him and always long to hear more about Him.

Lately, during one of these Communion instructions, I had an experience which I shall never forget. I was speaking about the Last Supper, that holy, memorable hour, when our Divine Saviour was about to take leave of this world. And when I began to speak of the most sacred thing in this world, the Holy Eucharist, that great token of the love of our Saviour, a deep, solemn hush fell over the class, like unto the solemn silence in the cenacle. The children were listening spell-bound, in the innocent eyes of many I could see glittering tears, and it seemed as if they wanted to say to me: "We will remain loyal and true to our loving Saviour all through life! Nothing shall separate us from Him! We will never betray Him like Judas!" Continue in this spirit, my dear children, and you will be well prepared on the day of your first holy Communion. Our Divine Saviour will surely be pleased with you.

He will gladly come to you if you will keep on coming to Him as readily as you do now. It is gratifying to tell with what zeal you have come to attend Mass lately. Even on weekdays nearly all of you are present. There is no one among you who misses Mass through sheer laziness, and but rarely one comes and sadly tells me: "My mother did not wake me in time." I trust even this excuse will not be offered again; then I shall be satisfied. You children must be real models to all the other children. That's why special pews have been assigned to you near the pulpit. The whole parish should

notice you and all should be able to say when they see you: "One cannot help noticing where the first communicants have their place. They are all in their pews long before the bells stop ringing, and not one of them is late. And see how devout they are! There is no talking, no tittering, no gaping about with them." That is the way it should be. And I am sure it will not happen this year as it did last year, that one of the first communicants must be called to order for trading pocket knives during Mass.

2

But now I am afraid your parents and the other grown-up people will think: "My, the way our pastor talks, one would imagine that this year's first communicants are real angels! He surely knows very little about them. He ought to have them around him for a day or two and see how they behave; then he would know that Margaret is still the same untidy and stubborn girl and Johnny still tells brazen lies, and Charlie's mother has to call him at least a dozen times or more every morning before that lazy lad will crawl out of bed."

My dear parents! I know all this nearly as well as you do. But do not think that your children are hypocrites because they are so well-behaved here in church. No, they are in real earnest. We must not forget that they are but children. We were no better in our younger days. Such a little youngster quickly grows enthusiastic about everything, makes all kinds of

promises in a spurt of excitement, but just as quickly forgets them. And because we are aware of this, we have asked you to come here to-day. Your children have charged me to beseech you in their name to help them prepare for the greatest day of their lives. You surely know how important this preparation is. As a child is trained during the period of his first Communion instructions, so he is apt to be in later life. If a child is not properly trained to virtue and piety during this period, he will seldom do better later. The older children are, the more difficult is the task of training them. Young trees can be trained upwards and straightened, but the best gardener will not be able to pull an old, gnarled oak straight again. It is the same with children. Therefore help the gardener of the soul to bind up and straighten the little human twigs if necessary. We shall make it a point, therefore, to speak to you personally regarding your children whenever the occasion presents itself. But do not think now that you must sing the praises of your children. On the contrary, we want to find out just where and how far your little human plant is growing crooked. Be so kind and tell us candidly about these things. We inquire and take notice of your children's faults, so that we may be able to help them to overcome them. Here, then, is where your aid is needed. All first communicants should have a notebook and every evening they should write into that notebook how they have succeeded or failed in overcoming their principal faults. Just as you remind them of their morning and night prayers and grace before and after meals, remind them in the eve-

ning to check up on their principal fault. If in spite of this your child does not improve, come and tell us about it, and we will consult with you as to what ought to be done.

My dear parents! Your children realize that you have only their best interests at heart if you will be a little stricter with them from now on than you were wont to be. Hence, I take the liberty to ask you to carry out the following suggestions.

Your children positively want to be obedient children from now on. Therefore, you mothers must henceforth be firm and determined in giving your orders. Insist on instant obedience without any "buts" and "ifs," and if you must punish, punish severely, so that the children will not easily forget.

Your children are resolved *always to tell the truth* because they know that to tell lies is a sign of cowardice or stupidity. Hence, you should never suffer untruths to pass uncensured. The first time you catch Peter or Lizzie telling a lie, say: "You want to be a first communicant! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

The children wish to gladden our dear Saviour's heart *not only with prayer, but with some little act of self-sacrifice every day.* You parents can help them by showing them how to go about it. At table, for instance, advise them to take less of the things they like best and an extra portion of the dishes they relish least. And another thing. Your children, especially the girls, have made up their minds *not to vex and bother their mothers regarding their first communion clothes.*

They know that the *main thing is the garment of sanctifying grace for the soul*. They also know that our parishioners are kind and good and will see to it that even the poorest children will be fittingly clothed on that day.

My dear parents! Grant your children their wish and help them as best as you can. Reading those little booklets for first communicants will give many useful hints in this regard. They also contain many edifying stories which will be of interest even to older folks. Why not read them aloud some evenings when the whole family is gathered in the parlor? They will awaken many pleasant memories in both old and young, and you will hear the echo of the sounds of the bells that summoned you to church on your first Communion day. Who knows but what such a first Communion booklet may become instrumental in bringing a whole family to the Communion rail again on the very morning of their child's first Communion day.

3

Well prepared first communicants are a blessing not only to the individual family, but also to the whole parish. Therefore, every parishioner must help so that our children may be well prepared. It rejoices and comforts a priest's heart to see how nobly our good Sisters and the other Catholic teachers support us in our work of giving instructions for first Communion. Their influence is readily felt. It is this same kind of coöperation which I ask from the whole parish. Let us pray

fervently that God may bless the combined labors of parents, priests, and teachers. With His grace and blessing the hearts of our dear children will be resplendent with beauty on their first Communion day. From now on, therefore, each Sunday after the sermon we will recite together one Our Father and Hail Mary for our first communicants, examining ourselves whether or not we have done our duty in their regard. Amen.

THE CHILD'S TUTORS

I. YOUR FATHER AND YOU

(Fourth Sunday after Epiphany)

“Honor thy father and thy mother. . . .” (Fourth Commandment.)

DEAR children! In a certain cemetery in the far West there is the grave of a poor beggar and his daughter. They were found frozen to death in the mountains, where they had been begging. The old man simply could not go on because of the bitter cold. He lay down in a mountain pass, exhausted and overcome by fatigue and cold, ready to die. Mary Catherine, his fifteen-year-old daughter, clung to him with all the tender love of a child and frantically fought against the cruel cold to save the life of her father. She put her bonnet over his head, wrapt her garments around him, and finally threw herself over his freezing body to keep him warm. But cold, cruel death knows no pity.

He took not only the life of the old man, but also the young life of the brave, heroic daughter. When the bodies were found, the daughter's cheeks were still bejewelled with the frozen tears of love.

Your father and you? My dear children, is your conduct towards your father always what it ought to be? Question yourselves regarding this point to-day. You look as if you wanted to ask: Why only about father, and not also about mother? Never mind, her turn will come next. Let us answer two questions to-day:

I. *What is your father to you?*

II. *What do you owe your father?*

I

Now pay close attention, I will not keep you long, and be sure to tell your father what you have heard if he is not here himself.

In most families the children are a little more afraid of their father than they are of their mother. The reason is not because (in some cases) he wears a beard or a mustache, but because he has such a deep commanding voice and a stronger hand and, above all, well—because he is what he is,—the father!

Your father takes the place of God in your family. Even our Divine Saviour, though he was the Son of God, wished to have also an earthly father. The father must see to it that the Commandments are kept by the whole family and that the children are good and God-fearing. Hence, all must obey him, and that's why he

is the head of the family. But he is still more. He is almost like a priest in his family, because some day he must give back to God the souls of his children. He must send the children to church and to religious instructions. He must render an account some day for his whole family. Your father has indeed a great and holy office.

He is, therefore, a great benefactor and friend to you.

He has to work and earn money for the family, that you may have a warm place in winter, that you may have a roof over your head, that you may have enough to eat and the necessary clothes to wear. He is the one who has to pay the doctor and the druggist in case you get sick.

But above all he is solicitous about your spiritual welfare. He pays for your schooling, he buys books and writing material that you may get an education and be able later on to make your own living. He wants his children to be not only intelligent and industrious, but also polite and virtuous. Hence he has got to keep an eye on you, to watch over you, to reprimand you, and to forbid you many things which you, in your ignorance, would like to have and do. Yes, and at times he even has to spank you, no matter how hard this is for him. Do you realize now that your father is your greatest benefactor?

My dear children! Now you can easily figure out for yourselves what you owe to your father.

First of all you owe your father honor and respect. It is only right that you should fear him a little. Mother is not always strict enough in rebuking and punishing you for your misbehaviour. At times it takes father's thundering voice and firm hand to clear the air and set things right. It should always fill you with wholesome fear when mother threatens: "I will tell father when he comes home!" Hence, you must speak of your father with the greatest respect, you must never ridicule him or answer him back, never insult him or speak of him in contempt, even if he has serious faults. Always remember what happened to Noe's wicked sons.

Secondly, you owe your father obedience. As a rule, children obey their father much better than their mother, because he is stricter. But children are at times so stupid as to wish that they would not have to obey so promptly. When my brother and I were small boys, we used to play and romp around on the street with other boys in the evening, and I can well remember how there would suddenly sound from the front door of our house a sharp whistle that would send something like an electric shock through our bones and how we would both turn on our heels at once and run home amid the laughter and sneers of the other boys. It always made us feel bad. Why was our father so strict? We simply had to obey that first whistle, as the second would have meant a licking. As I think it over now, I am grateful to my father and glad that he trained us to such instant obedience. It has done us a world of good. Obey your father gladly! Holy Scrip-

ture tells us that our Saviour was obedient to His parents for thirty years.

And then you must be grateful to your father. Please him in some little thing every day, be it through prompt obedience or good behaviour or diligence or through some kind favor which you lovingly do him. He may not say much, he may scarcely praise you, but inwardly he feels proud of you and appreciates your gratitude and good will. Do not blame him if he looks sad and gloomy at times, or speaks little or nothing, and is short and harsh in his answers and commands. Do not forget that he has many troubles and sorrows and most of them on account of you!

Dear children! The father of a prominent family had died and was buried with great splendor. The choir sang and the orchestra played at the funeral. The costly coffin was covered with the finest draperies and loads of flowers. After the burial his children erected an expensive marble monument over his grave and planted fresh and fragrant roses upon the little mound. But there it ended. The deceased father was soon forgotten. One night, however, when every one was sound asleep and the whole house was in complete darkness, the youngest of the family, the father's pet, a boy of twelve, awoke suddenly. It seemed to him that somebody was pulling at his bed covers. He rubbed his eyes and stared into the dark. A man dressed in Sunday clothes entered through the closed door and walked right up to the bed and looked at the boy for a long time. The child was thoroughly frightened and wanted to scream: "Father!" It was his deceased

father standing before him. The man motioned with his hand and said in a low, sad voice: "Henry, my dearest child, will you do me a favor? Pray for me!" And then the apparition disappeared. Henry sat up in bed crying for a long time. Oh, yes, the family had entirely forgotten to pray for father.

Dear children! Pray for your father now while he is still alive. The most beautiful way to show him your gratitude is to lift up your hands daily toward Heaven to Him who is the Father of all men, praying: "Our Father who art in Heaven!" Amen.

2. YOUR MOTHER AND YOU

(Fifth Sunday after Epiphany)

My dear children! During the World War a friend of mine, a brave, stalwart young man, was drafted and sent overseas after his older brother had died a hero's death on the battle-field. He responded to his country's call with all the ardour and patriotism of a true soldier. Only one thing was hard for him, to part from his gentle, sorely tried mother. "Mother," he said, giving her his hand for the last time and with difficulty holding back the tears in his eyes, "cheer up! Be brave! Let us pray for each other! If it is God's will, we shall meet again, if not in this world, then in a better one!"—With this he left for the army. He did his duty gallantly, gaining the favor of his commander, with whom he was doing practically all of the most dangerous scouting. One night he was sent

out in order to ascertain the position and approximate strength of the enemy forces. He had already reached the barbed-wire obstruction and was noiselessly cutting wire after wire to crawl up on the enemy and observe them at close range, when suddenly a fiery ball soared skyward, illuminating the battle-field. The enemy's outpost spied him. A shot, and the young hero dropped mortally wounded, and was caught in the wire barrier. Nobody could save him, he hung there for a whole day, moaning and writhing with pain. All day long he called for help. Just as the sun set in the west, there came once more a painful outcry: "O mother!"—then all was still.

My dear children! "Mother" was the last word on the lips of many a soldier who had to die on the battle-fields far away from home. And when night fell, and with it came a lull on the firing line, one could hear the tired men back in the trenches singing and re-singing with a touch of homesickness songs of home with a refrain like this: "My mother's prayers have followed me." (Mother Machree.)

My dear children! The word "mother" awakened in the hearts of these rough men the dearest and fondest memories. *What is your mother to you? What do you owe your mother?* I am happy to speak to you about your mother; for my heart beats faster when I think of what my mother is to me!

a. *What is Your Mother to You?*

My dear children! You were told last Sunday that the father is the head of the family, to whom you

should look up with reverence and respect. What is the mother, if the father is the head of the family? The heart is the noblest and most important part of man. Hence, the mother must be the heart of the family. The heart is the center of life and love. See, children, your life and all that you have received of love and warmth, you have from your mother. What would you be without your mother? Look at a little, new-born child! It is weaker and more helpless than the little bird just crawling out of the shell! Had not a mother's love and tender care watched over you in your infancy, from the first moment of your life, not one of you would be here to-day! Such a little infant could open his mouth ever so wide and cry ever so loud and ever so long, it would avail him nothing if his good mother were not there to still the hunger of the little howler with the most precious food she can give her darling!

And did you not need your mother's care also as you grew up? It was upon her lap that you folded your little hands and lisped your first prayers. It was she who guided your awkward hand when you began scribbling your first a b c. It was your mother who made the first little dresses which you wore as a child. In all truth, then, you can say: "Thanks to thee, sweet mother, for what I am and what I have. I kiss the dear fingers worn with toil for me."

But were you not told last Sunday that your father was the one who earned the money to buy food and clothing and pay the doctor's bills and school books? Yes; but it is your mother who prepares the meals and

sees to it that you always have something to eat, even when father is out of work. True, father pays the doctor and the druggist, but who sits at your bedside day and night and nurses you when you are sick? And if you have received a good training, to whom are you indebted for it? Father is gone from morning to night, and his part in the training of his children consists mostly in administering severe punishment when all gentler means have failed to produce the desired results. But your dear mother is around you all day and tries her best by means of example, teaching, and love to train you to be useful men and women. And if she fails? Do you know the anxiety and sorrow of so many mothers because of their wayward children? How many a mother, like St. Monica, prays for years to bring a wayward child back to the path of virtue! You are probably to blame if your mother's hair is beginning to turn grey, although she is still young. When you get home to-day, take a good look at your mother, and if you see that her hair is beginning to fade, you will know that it is high time for you to make a serious examination of conscience!

"Mother"—what a wellspring of blessing and love this word is for us all! Your mother is still living; do you realize what those children lack who never knew a mother's love and gentle care? Those unhappy children are the poorest of all the poor! Catholic children in such a plight, however, should not be disheartened; for they know that they have a mother in Heaven whose loving care richly compensates their loss and

whose maternal guidance they invoke in the words of the beautiful hymn:

“Mother dear, oh, pray for me,
Whilst far from Heaven and thee
I wander in a fragile bark
Over life’s tempestuous sea.
Protect thy child and cheer my path
With thy sweet smile of love.”

b. *What do You Owe Your Mother?*

Dear children! As soon as you understand what your mother really is to you, you will realize what you owe her. Do you consider those to be good children whose mother must constantly complain: “My daughter, you grieve me to death!” or: “My son, you break my heart and send me to an early grave!” Such children have no love and reverence for their mother.

Dear children! Filial love and respect is what you owe to your mother first of all. Hence, the admonition which Tobias gave to his son, also holds good for each one of you: “Honor your mother all the days of your life, and bear in mind how much she suffered for you” (Tob. IV, 3-4).

Among the Arabs it is customary for a son to take off his shoes when he approaches his mother. This custom should remind the young man that the dust and dirt of the street are not to be brought into the presence of his mother, because the very ground whereon she walks is holy, and that it behooves a son always to be well-behaved and modest in his mother’s presence.

How shameful, then, is the behaviour of Christian children who grumble and pout when mother gives her orders! No mother should ever tolerate from any of her children the well-known answer: "I won't do it!"

Honor your mother, respect her, obey her, not unwillingly and with a grumble, but out of love. Lately the mother of a large family complained to me about her son, who is a freshman in the local high school. She had asked him to carry coal for her from the cellar to the floor where they lived, because she felt tired and it caused her pain to run up and down the stairs. The foolish lad thought it was beneath his dignity to do such work, and flatly refused. Is this gratitude and love? What if his mother had refused her services to him when he still lay in his swaddling clothes?

Yes, but if you have a mother who scolds you and slaps you and finds fault with you all day long, you say you cannot help getting gruff and answering back. Now listen here! Why is your mother so nervous and irritable? How grouchy you feel in the morning if you could not sleep for just one night! How many nights do you think your mother was kept awake for your sake? I do not mean those nights only when you were sick, but also those many other nights when she could not sleep for grief over your youthful follies, or for worry how to provide food, how to make ends meet, when you needed a pair of shoes and your sister a new dress! A great man once said: "A mother who has brought up a child would need a whole year's sleep,

day and night, to make up for all the sleep she lost over her darling." As she cannot have this rest, her nerves are shattered and, as a consequence, she is irritable and impatient. Remembering that your mother has probably lost her health for your sake, ought you not to blush for shame if you have treated your mother gruffly and disrespectfully?

And then too, my child, think what you will have to answer for if you break your mother's heart and send her to an early grave. When she is gone, you will realize what you have lost.

About thirty years ago a young priest was called upon to bury a woman who had died suddenly by the wayside. She was a stranger, a beggar, wholly unknown to him. When he had said the last prayers over the grave, the dead woman's only child, a girl of sixteen, broke through the crowd and threw herself upon the open grave, crying in a heart-breaking voice: "O mother, mother, take me with you!"

Dear children! Can you put yourselves into this girl's place, who was left alone in the world after her mother's death? Therefore be good to your mother now. Do not embitter and shorten her precious life, but make her burden sweet and light, gladden her days by your obedience and love and by taking upon yourselves part of her cares and labors, as you grow older and more sensible. Love her as long as you are able to love, and always treat her as you will wish you had treated her when you stand at her grave. Pray every day that God may keep and preserve your mother. Amen.

3. YOU AND YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

(Sixth Sunday after Epiphany)

My dear children! Two charming little boys were often seen playing together on the front steps of their home. They were twins and everybody in the village loved them. Their names were Henry and Michael. Michael was a frail and sickly child and for that reason was watched over and protected by his brother Henry. They were always together and never quarreled. One day Michael died, and Henry was left alone. It was a severe blow to the tender-hearted child. For weeks he would not show himself at all and after that one could see the otherwise so cheerful and happy boy sitting sad and downcast on the front steps. When people asked him: "What makes you feel so sad?" he would look at them piteously and say: "My brother Michael is no longer here! Do you know where he is?" "Why yes," they would answer, "Michael is in Heaven." And then he would beg: "Please show me the way to Heaven, I want to go to my little Michael!" His longing was soon to be stilled. Henry died of a broken heart and rejoined his beloved brother in the abode of the blessed.

Those two little twin brothers loved each other so dearly that one could not live without the other. Is this also the case in your home? How do you and your brothers and sisters get along together? We will think this over this morning and find out how you should act towards your

I. *Older brothers and sisters and towards*

II. *Your younger brothers and sisters.*

My dear children! If you have any brothers and sisters, whether they are older or younger than yourselves, rejoice and thank God, for it is a great favor.

I

No doubt you would rather complain about your older brothers and sisters and tell me how mean and rude they are towards you, how they tease and whip you and how they anger and annoy your parents. . . . Well, it can hardly be as bad as all that, for you are still alive and kicking. But I admit there may be times when you do not know just how to behave towards your older brothers and sisters.

It is quite natural that your older brothers and sisters should have more rights than you at home. They have been in this world a few years longer than you, they are stronger and must work harder than you. Hence you must not be jealous of them and grow angry if they are preferred to you at times. You must not always think yourselves equal to your older brothers and sisters.

You answer: "That is all very well; but what when my older brothers and sisters treat me roughly, when they strike me and call me names? I simply have to defend myself. Surely you cannot expect me to take everything from them!" My dear children, when you have difficulties with your brothers and sisters, your parents are there to see to it that peace and order

are restored, lest there be quarrels and wrangling without end. Besides, it will do no harm if, in disputes with your elder brothers and sisters, you follow the proverb: "He who has more sense gives in."

On the other hand, your brothers and sisters do not always speak and act as they should, and therefore you may not follow their example in everything. When they are naughty, you must not imitate them, lest you fare badly, like the little fellow who secretly smoked cigarettes and got very sick. Make it your rule to imitate only what is good in your older brothers and sisters, but never what is bad!

2

Regarding your younger brothers and sisters, let me tell you:

(1) what they are not and (2) what they are.

a. *What your younger brothers and sisters are not?* They are not your servants! To command them is the right of your parents, not yours. The family is not a soldier's barrack. You have no right to order your younger brothers and sisters about as you please. If you want their help, ask it as a favor, or request your parents to tell them to assist you. If you have been given charge over them, do not mistreat them, but be kind to them, for it is your duty to love them.

Your younger brothers and sisters are no dummies for you to punch and beat at your pleasure. Try your superior strength on yourselves or on the work which your parents have assigned to you. Nor are your

younger brothers and sisters so many lightning rods for your anger and sloth. If you are out of humor, that is no reason why you should make your brothers and sisters feel miserable. And if you are too lazy to do the work assigned to you by your parents, don't for a moment think that your younger brothers and sisters are in this world for you to shift your work on to them, so that you can indulge in some favorite sport.

b. *What, then, are your younger brothers and sisters?* They are, as it were, your pupils. They want to learn from you. Be a model unto them and show them by your example how to obey cheerfully, how to rise promptly in the morning when you are called, how to be industrious and how to keep silence whenever circumstances demand it.

They are also your friends, your helpers, and your playmates. Go out with them and teach them plays and games, take them under your care, and defend them if necessary. Do your work and prepare your lessons together with them, helping them along if they cannot manage alone, admonishing and warning them when they are up to some mischief or foolish pranks. To perform these duties properly, of course, you must do right yourselves. You would certainly have to be ashamed of yourselves if your younger brothers and sisters behaved better than you.

My dear children! I sincerely hope that henceforth the complaints of your parents about fighting and quarrelling in the family circle will stop. If you do all that you have been told to do this morning, I am sure

there will be mutual understanding and good feeling in your family. Amen.

4. YOUR SAVIOUR AND YOU

(Septuagesima Sunday)

(Address for Monthly Communion)

MY dear children! In the last three sermons I have told you how you should behave towards your parents and towards your brothers and sisters. By now your home has probably become a little paradise! Father no longer needs to apply the strap and mother has no more worries because there is no more fighting going on, even if seven sisters and brothers sit together in a small kitchen. Now, at last, there is peace and harmony in the family! Is it not so—eh? I notice a few embarrassed faces before me and some of you are eyeing me as if they wanted to say: “Father, peace is still a long way off!” Yes, and in your last confession the priest probably had to call your attention again to the fourth and fifth Commandments regarding obedience at home and quarrelling and fighting between brothers and sisters. God knows it *is* hard at times to keep all the good resolutions we have made. I know that as well as you. Hence I want to introduce you to-day to a good friend who will be only too glad to help you. Do you know who He is? Jesus, your Saviour. You and He together will succeed where you

alone, left to your own resources, could accomplish nothing. Your Saviour and you shall be the subject of our meditation to-day.

I. *What is your Saviour to you?*

II. *What do you owe Him?*

I. *What is your Saviour to you?*

Jesus is your *helper* and *friend*. When you find it hard to practise the lessons which you hear from the pulpit, in the confessional, and in school; when it seems impossible to conquer your faults and evil inclinations, then go to him; He will help you.

We read in the life of St. Philip Neri that a young man came to him one day and confessed amid tears that he had often fallen into a grievous sin. He said: "I detest this awful sin! But the temptations and my evil inclination are so strong that I always give in." St. Philip consoled the young man. What advice do you think he gave him? He said to him: "Go to Holy Communion every day for two weeks, and you will be able to resist this temptation!" The sinner followed the Saint's advice, and behold, through the frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist this evil inclination was so weakened and his will so strengthened that he never fell into that sin again.

The Saviour is your helper and friend, who will assist you in the fight against evil. But He is more than that. He causes you to be happy in doing good and to begin a new and better life.

Is it not remarkable that a boy who used to be

naughty and disobedient, was so changed after his first Holy Communion that his father and mother said to each other: "One can hardly recognize him!" You will remember the story I told you of Francis, the son of a criminal, who after his First Holy Communion would rather be killed than assist his father in committing a wicked deed. The change thus wrought in a child is as great as the change from night to day or from winter to summer.

How bare and desolate are the fields and forests at this time. One would think that nature was dead. But in a few weeks from now forests and meadows will be arrayed in fragrant green, a carpet of beautiful flowers will cover the earth; the birds will sing in the bushes and trees. You would not believe it to be the self-same earth? Who produces this marvelous change? The sun, rising higher from day to day, melts the snow and ice and awakens flowers and blossoms to a new life.

Behold, children, what the sun does in nature, that Jesus does in your hearts if you receive Him frequently and worthily in Holy Communion. A veritable spring-time shower of fragrant virtues will bud and blossom in the garden of your hearts if the Saviour lets the sun of His grace shine there. But He not only let His sun shine into your hearts; He actually enters them and dwells there as your best and truest friend!

2. *What do you owe your Saviour?*

My dear children! This beautiful new life can continue in your soul only if you help along and render

to your Saviour what you owe Him. And what is it that you owe Him? Gratitude, loyalty, and love.

Communion hymns and prayers beautifully express our gratitude and love for Jesus, and when you say or sing them before or after Holy Communion, do so with love and devotion and put your whole heart into them. Once a contagious disease broke out in a big city. A Catholic Sister, who was a nurse, walked along saying her beads on her way to the hospital. A man, half drunk and godless, ridiculed and insulted her. The next day the wretch was brought to the hospital in a dying condition. The hospital was overcrowded and the officials were on the point of sending him away, when the Sister whom he had so shamefully insulted the day before, appeared on the scene. What do you think she did? She begged the superintendent until he consented to take this man in. She gave him her own bed and herself slept on a straw mattress out in the hall. With heroic charity she nursed the sick man until he was well again, and then she herself lay down and died from the disease which she had contracted while nursing him. This man is said to have visited the cemetery every day for many years, laying fresh flowers on the good Sister's grave as a tribute of gratitude.

My dear children! Did not that Sister act beautifully towards the man who had insulted her? But there is one who is even nobler than this good Sister and shows infinitely greater love for us all. And yet, in spite of His love, we have heaped insults and indignities upon our Divine Redeemer; we have scourged Him and nailed Him to the cross where He gave up

his life to save us from hell and to gain for us eternal life. And wishing to nourish and strengthen this new life within us, He gives Himself to us as the manna of our souls!

If we consider all this, must we not repeat over and over again: "I owe my dear Jesus so much that I can never be sufficiently thankful to Him!" Should we not daily plant fresh flowers of love and self-denial in the garden of our hearts and delight the Heavenly Gardener, who is forever watching over the lovely blossoms of virtue? Therefore, my child, tell your Saviour how sorry you are for having strayed away from Him by sin, and beseech Him most fervently to come back to you. And when He is again with you, tell Him humbly and entreatingly: "Come and take me by the hand and guide me up to Thee; that I may love Thee and be happy with Thee for all eternity." Amen.

5. YOUR TEACHER AND YOU

(Sexagesima Sunday)

"Let the little children come to me!" (Matt. XIX, 14.)

My dear children! Besides your parents and your brothers and sisters, and besides your Saviour, there is another one who plays a very important part in your training. Who is that? It is your teacher. Many of you do not seem to appreciate your teachers. Hence it will not be out of place to-day to preach on the

subject: *Your teacher and you*. Again we will answer two questions:

I. *What is your teacher to you?*

II. *What do you owe him?*

I. *What is your teacher to you?*

Dear children! Some time ago I saw a beautiful picture above the entrance of a country school. It represented our Divine Saviour with a large group of children gathered around him. Their innocent faces were eagerly turned towards Him as they listened with rapt attention to the Saviour telling them about their dear Father in Heaven. Underneath the picture was written in letters of gold: "Let the little children come to Me!"

Why was this painting chosen to adorn the entrance to the school? What were the children expected to learn from it? As the pupils daily walked up the steps of the school having this picture before their eyes, the picture and the inscription on it were to say to them: "Come here gladly, my dear children, because there is waiting for you a devoted friend, who, like his model, our Divine Saviour, will teach you the truth and guide you on the way to Heaven." By this picture and the inscription beneath it the children were taught in a most beautiful way that the teachers do for them the work of the Divine Friend of children and that they are, in a certain sense, representatives of Christ, just like the priest.

My dear children! I once knew a kindly old Sister who was an excellent teacher and a real friend of children. For this very reason she would deal out severe punishment when necessary. A great many children under her charge had grown up into splendid men and women. After her death a notebook was found on her desk, wherein she had written a line or two each day about her experiences with the children. Many sad, but also many joyful incidents were recorded there. On the first page was a sentence which shows you how seriously your teachers take their vocation. This sentence read as follows: "I will look upon each child under my care, even the poorest and plainest, as my possible accuser before the judgment seat of God, if I fail in my duty and neglect to give him as good a Christian training as I am able."

Your teachers' aim is to educate you to be useful men and women and good Christians.

First to be useful men and women. And that is by no means easy. Do you really think it is a pleasure to stand in the class-room day by day, year in year out, and teach the a b c to little first graders or to pound the multiplication table into foggy little heads? Have you never heard your teacher say in moments of discouragement: "I would rather quarry rock than teach such a class!" And yet there are children who think it is great fun to be a teacher. Look at those teachers who have spent fifteen or twenty years in the class-room, how many of them are in ill health, how many have grown old before their time! Believe me, there are many teachers who feel worse than the children do

when they have to punish them. But at times they must punish because it is their duty. He who does not acquire a fair amount of knowledge in his youth will never amount to much in later life. Ask the graduates as to their experiences in getting a position. They will tell you that the first thing the employers ask is: "Where did you go to school? Did you graduate? Show me your diploma!" As a rule only those who have successfully finished school are considered for really good positions. Your teachers know this, and that is why they take such great pains to instruct you so that the education they give you may enable you to make a good living. From this you can see how foolish a child is who imagines that he is learning for the benefit of the teacher.

The aim of your teachers is to make efficient men and women of you, to equip you with the knowledge essential to success. But their efforts on your behalf aim at something still higher. *They also want you to become good practical Catholics.* If they fail in this, all your knowledge will profit you nothing. Oh, how often must priests and teachers to their great sorrow see how the brightest pupils turn out badly in later years! It is for this reason that your teachers insist on discipline and order and do everything in their power to make you honest, truth-loving, and well-behaved children. Children are often more indebted for their education to their teachers than they are to their parents, who are inclined to be too lenient. The good advice which pupils receive from their teachers often bears fruit long after the teachers themselves have

gone to their reward. I know that this was the case with my mother. She often started her motherly advice with the words: "As my old teacher used to say. . . ." We did not know mother's teacher, yet she lived among us through her teaching. It is true, then, that your teacher does more for your education than your parents, who have to work hard and have not much time left for this work. The teacher is also better qualified for it. He or she has studied for years the art of teaching and training children and has grown intimately acquainted with hundreds, nay, thousands of children. And because your teachers know how important it is to instil Christian principles into young minds, they endeavor first of all to lay the foundation on which to build your character by teaching you the truths of our holy religion. And thus your teacher becomes in a special manner the representative of the Saviour, who is the Divine Friend of children.

2. *What do you owe to your teachers?*

My dear children! By now you probably have begun to realize how much you are indebted to your teachers. The better you understand what your teachers are to you, the more faithful you will become in discharging your duties towards them.

You owe them first of all *attention and diligence*. All your teachers' efforts will be in vain if you are not attentive in school and fail to study your lessons at home. Do not let your thoughts roam during school hours and indulge in day-dreaming instead of having

your mind on your lesson. Do not look out of the window and wish school were out, so that you could play again. And after you get home, do not have your thoughts exclusively on play, but think of your lessons for the next day before it is time to go to bed.

A good scholar is attentive and industrious in school because he realizes that he owes this to the teacher who takes so much trouble with him. But that is not all. You also owe your teachers *obedience and respectful behavior*. If you do not fail in these things, your teachers will find but little occasion to scold and punish you. But if they deem it necessary to punish, accept the chastisement with a good will and resolve to do better in future. It is stupid and sinful to act as some girls do, who feel offended if the teacher utters even one word of rebuke. It is misconduct and a sin to be surly and answer back, as some boys believe they have a right to do every time the teacher has to punish them. I tried that once when I was in the first grade. Trying to imitate the big boys, when being punished by the teacher, I muttered: "Just wait, I'll tell my father on you!" That earned a second punishment for me. In the evening the teacher himself told my father the incident and he punished me also. None of us would have dared to complain to our father about the teachers or even mention their nicknames.

You must always be respectful towards your teachers without, however, trying to be their pet. You know what I mean. Those would-be pets in school often turn out the worst ingrates later on. Only recently one of the teachers complained that a boy who

had just finished school passed her on the street and acted as if he had never known her. Yet he was one of those who always pretended to be willing to go through the fire for his teacher. A boy with but one spark of respect and gratitude in his heart will be friendly and courteous and grateful to his former teachers as long as he lives.

While I was preparing this sermon, an incident of my boyhood days came back to my memory. Our mother would take us children to the cemetery each year on the feast of All Saints to pray for our dear dead and to lay wreaths on their graves. After visiting the graves of our near relatives, mother would lead us to a far-away nook in the graveyard, where there was a neat, modest stone. "Look, children," she would say, "here lies our good old teacher, to whom I went to school for eight years. I owe her a great deal, and so do you. Let us kneel down and say an Our Father for the repose of her soul." And she does this year after year, although she graduated from school over fifty years ago and is now old and grey herself. Every year she plants the most beautiful roses of love and gratitude on the grave of the Sister who was her teacher when she was a child.

My dear children! You too should preserve such an edifying and noble remembrance of your school teachers. Bring a smiling face and a heart full of good will to the class-room every day. If you are attentive and diligent in school and respectful to your teachers, you will approach them gladly, as the children approached our Lord Jesus Christ when He called them,

saying: "Let the little children come to me!" Your school-room will then be a little heaven. Amen.

6. YOUR PRIEST AND YOU

(Quinquagesima Sunday)

"I am the good shepherd. . . ." (John X, 11.)

MY dear children! I am pleased to notice that your conduct has improved and you are getting along better with your teachers since our last sermon. As a reward I will give you an easy riddle to solve: On certain days of the week there stands in your class-room one who is dressed in black from head to foot and is neither a chimney-sweeper nor a raven. Who is he? Why, that is an easy one, you say: He is our priest. Correct! There are many people who do not like to see the "black robe," as the Indians were wont to call him. But, my dear children, I would like to say to you what the angel said to the shepherds: "Fear not, I bring you tidings of great joy." Your priests are even more deeply interested in your welfare than your parents and teachers. They want to impart supernatural life and light to your souls and make you God-fearing and conscientious men and women. Our Catholic children know this, and that's why they are not afraid of their priests, but regard them as their best friends and address them by the beautiful title of "Father." The priest is in truth your spiritual father and as such his life is very closely interwoven with your

own. That you may understand and appreciate this fact better, let us make it the subject of to-day's sermon. Your priest and you:

I. *What is your priest to you?*

II. *What do you owe your priest?*

I. *What is your priest to you?*

My dear children! You will have to search far and wide before you will find another human being, besides your parents and teachers, who is so important for you as the priest. You cannot regard him with indifference nor treat him as a stranger. For beneath his black cassock beats a heart full of love for you, consumed by the one desire to tell you: "*I am the good shepherd.*" This is the first thing the priest would like to be to you: a good shepherd, the successor of Christ. The priest is ordained by God to offer up sacrifice; he holds in his hands the keys of Heaven and is invested with greater power than all the choirs of angels. He stands before you in his simple black robe as another Christ; his hands are consecrated to hold the Sacred Body of our Lord; his eyes look upon you in tender love as he says: "Like your Divine Saviour, whom my hands are consecrated to hold, I wish to be your true and faithful friend and will guide you safely to Heaven!"

Believe me, dear children, a priest is never happier than when he is surrounded by a host of bright-eyed, healthy, lively children, praying with them or joining in their games or winning their confidence in loving

conversation. And when two hundred or more little feet and arms scramble around him and hundreds of little throats sing and yell, it will not vex him nor make him nervous. On the contrary, he feels at home with you, and from the depth of his heart there rises to Heaven the fervent prayer: "O Lord, protect these precious little hearts, whom thou hast entrusted to my care, and grant that I may one day return them all to Thee!" The saddest days of a priest's life are those on which he learns that one of his flock has gone astray or is in want and misery. He will have neither peace nor rest until the lost sheep has found its way back to him and its Saviour. Every priest who understands his vocation rightly may in very truth say to you: "I am your good shepherd."

If you earnestly reflect upon the close and tender relations existing between your pastor and you, you will easily understand that the priest, next to your parents and teachers, is *your greatest benefactor on earth*. He cannot, it is true, give you riches, because he himself, as a rule, has but an empty purse. You do not want money from him anyhow. What you do want he is only too glad to give you. What is that? A little boy in a dream one night saw a lovely fairy coming towards him and spreading out before his eyes toys and precious things. Sweetly smiling the fairy said: "Do these things make you happy? You may have them all if you will be my friend." Just then a noble prince appeared on the scene, and spreading a glittering robe upon the bed he said: "This robe signifies fame and glory; you can attain both if you will be

my friend." The boy was just ready to strike a bargain when he saw a priest standing by his bedside, who gazed at him lovingly and said: "My child, what will all this profit you? Behold, I bring you something far more precious; pray, keep it and be my friend." So saying, he offered him a plain little grey box. The boy, however, was greatly disappointed and refused to take it. "Open it," said the priest, "and see what it contains!" Opening the box, he found a golden key. "This little key," said the priest, "will one day unlock the gates of Heaven for you, if you keep it faithfully; it is your holy Catholic faith." The child awoke and understood that the gift of faith is our greatest treasure here below. This priceless treasure, this *golden key of Heaven*, my child, the priest will give you and preserve for you. It will not only open the gates of Heaven, but also unlock for you already here on earth many golden doors, through which the sun of grace sends its rays of spiritual joy and consolation into your hearts. Think of your *first confession*! How happy you were when the priest opened unto you the Heart of Jesus for the first time to wash away your sins in His precious Blood! Think of your *first holy Communion*! Your heart overflowed with heavenly joy when the priest with this golden key opened the tabernacle door to give you the food of angels.

A priest's life, my dear children, is not all sunshine. It is rather a difficult task to watch over souls, to train men in the practice of virtue, to guide their hearts and consciences, instilling into them pure and lofty principles,—in a word to help you to grow up to be

staunch and faithful Catholics. I repeat, the priest's heart is often heavy with anxiety, care, and worry. Who can count the sacrifices and prayers he offers to the Eucharistic Lord to obtain for you the grace of perseverance, that you may prove faithful to the end!

The priest is your truest friend who will never abandon you. Like your shadow, black in appearance and yet so bright, he accompanies you through life. He stood by your cradle to baptize you and he will some day stand beside your deathbed with the Holy Viaticum, pressing the little golden key of Heaven into your hands for the last time. Behold my child, all this your priest is to you!

2. *What do you owe your priest?*

It will not be difficult for you to realize what you owe your priest. However, I will quicken your thoughts by pointing out a few things.

The priest is your *spiritual father*, who takes care of your soul, the most precious thing you possess. Hence, you owe him *deep reverence*. You know a priest is addressed as Reverend Father. He holds a position of fatherly dignity and authority over his spiritual children. In every priest we recognize an ambassador of our Divine Saviour. Treat him as you would our Lord himself. He is Christ's representative on earth, of whom Holy Scripture says: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" *Honor and revere the priesthood!*

A beautiful custom prevails in many parts of Europe. Children meeting a priest on the street hold out their

hands to him saying: "*Praised be Jesus Christ!*" That is a fine act of reverence because, in saluting the priest thus, you think at once of the Divine Master Himself. How edifying it is if a courteous young lad, on seeing a priest, leaves his comrades and, coming up to him, shakes hands with him saying: "Hello, Father, how are you?" That makes the priest feel happy and honored because the young lad remembers the respect due to his pastor. You may safely regard your priest as your friend. Never fear that by giving him your confidence you will violate reverence. On the contrary, true reverence is ennobled by love and confidence. We priests are not looking for high-sounding titles and compliments; we are not Oriental pashas or sultans who delight in the crooked backs of slaves bowing before them. Meet us with an upright, sincere heart.

I have a *serious admonition* and a *request* to make of you, my dear children. Be not satisfied with honoring your priests yourselves, but also see to it *that others follow your example*. Allow no one to ridicule and insult a priest in your presence. Remember: The priest is an ambassador of Christ! A young priest was riding on a train. Six college boys were in the same coach with him, engaged in a lively conversation among themselves. From time to time the priest gave them a friendly smile, which the boys courteously and promptly reciprocated. At a way station a travelling salesman entered the coach and, seeing the priest, sat down with the young lads and began to insult and ridicule the priesthood and the Catholic religion. He regarded the

boys as young, giddy, light-headed freshmen who would join in. But he soon found out that he was mistaken. At first the boys kept quiet; then the bravest among them sharply requested the drummer to hold his tongue. The boys were all Catholics and they would not stand by quietly and listen to him insulting their priests and their religion. The man became insolent and repeated his insulting language. The boys sprang from their seats and held twelve robust fists under his nose, whereupon the scoffer deemed it advisable to shut up and get off the train at the next station. All honor to those brave, manly lads! You, too, should always protect and defend the honor of your priests and never permit any one to ridicule or insult them in your presence.

Have *confidence* in your priests. It is their mission to help and comfort you in your trials and sorrows. Do not imagine that the way to your priest is barricaded by padlocked doors. He is always accessible to you as a dear friend; he always has time for you; you may empty your heart before him, even if there be a lot of dust in it and you find it hard at times to give him your confidence. He is the physician of your soul and will find the proper remedies for your afflictions.

In the afternoon of a sultry summer day a large group of travellers stood at the depot of a certain city waiting for a train. Suddenly a terrific thunderstorm broke over their heads, and one and all hurried to the waiting room to seek shelter. A Benedictine Father was the last to enter. Just then a drunken man forced his way to the door and with a terrible curse

hurled the priest back, but losing his balance, fell to the ground. Almost instantly he was on his feet again, and before any one could interfere, he rushed forward with a knife in his hand, threatening the life of the priest. At that instant a flash of lightning, followed by a deafening thunder clap, hurled the assailant to the ground, while the priest, pale as death, but unhurt, stood only a few steps away. The man was a corpse, burned black as coal. In this way God punished one wicked man who attacked His representative.

Dear children! Let us honor and respect the priesthood, for the priests are sent by God. Amen.

II. LENT AND EASTER

FOUR HOLY MOUNTAINS

I. THE MOUNTAIN OF TEMPTATION

(First Sunday in Lent)

It is Lent, my dear children. Do you know what that means? Lent is a time of penance, of suffering, and of obedience. But don't think that you have to blacken your faces and pull out your hair. We only want to take you by the hand and lead you up a beautiful but steep highway to four holy mountains. In this spiritual ascent you are to fill the lungs of your soul, that is, your good will, with the fresh air of God's grace and to give to the limbs of your soul, I mean the acts of self-denial and self-control, plenty of healthy exercise. What mountains are these?

The first holy mountain is *the mountain of temptation*. We will ascend this mountain to-day.

I. *What do we see up there?*

II. *What can we learn up there?*

I

This mountain of temptation, as you have heard in to-day's Gospel, is a bleak, desolate elevation with yel-

low, sun-baked sand regions as far as the eye can see. Here and there a huge rock raises its head, its gaping fissures opening like the jaws of hell, seeking whom they may devour. Here our Divine Saviour spent forty days and forty nights without food and drink. During the day the hot sun scorched him, and at night the wild beasts entertained Him with their hungry roar.

Nobody thinks of our Saviour, no one has compassion on Him! Oh, yes, there is one! Satan, the prince of the devils. He sees the Saviour hungry and in distress. "Ah," he thinks, and the thought flashes through his mind like infernal lightning, "a splendid opportunity! Perhaps I can carry my scheme through and catch Him now! I, the prince of hell, win over the Lord of Heaven! Ha-ha, triumph!"

And the temptation begins. The devil approaches Jesus with a pious face! "The Saviour is hungry; hence He should eat. I will serve Him bread. Perhaps He will perform a miracle before my eyes and change these stones into bread!" And the Saviour? Sternly He says: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." The first attack has failed.

But the devil is stubborn. He comes back with another weapon. "If you are pious," he thinks, "I can be pious too." And straightway he takes the Saviour up into the Holy City and places Him upon the pinnacle of the Temple. Surely a sacred place! He tells Him to throw himself down the rocky cliffs—a bold stunt! But Jesus can do it; for Holy Writ says: "He hath

given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone." And he, the devil, who is so pious, surely knows his Bible! But the Saviour says: "*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God!*" The devil is beaten a second time.

But he is not satisfied yet. He now plays the highest trump he holds in his hands, the clever gambler! He takes the Saviour up to the highest mountain peak and shows him a wonderful picture of his magic art: namely, all the riches of the world in one glance. And then he poses in front of the Saviour: "What do you think of that? All this is mine! I will give it all to you, if you will fall down and adore me . . . !" What unheard-of boldness! The Son of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is asked to adore this scoundrel, this castaway, the prince of evil, and to acknowledge him as his Lord and God? You see, children, how bold the devil is! And the Saviour? He does not argue, but forthwith drives him off: "Begone, Satan! The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve!" And so his third attack, the boldest and cleverest of all, has also failed. The Saviour triumphs over Satan.

2

What lesson can we learn from this, my dear children? The scene we have just witnessed is staged over and over again in the life of each one of us. The attacks of the devil are the temptations against which we must fight. This is one of the first tasks of Lent.

Hence, two questions: (1) Where does the enemy stand? (2) How can we defeat him?

The shrewd old devil is forever young and never at a loss when planning an assault. Therefore, we must show him that we are no fools and can handle him as the Saviour did on the mountain of temptation.

The devil is a powerful ruler and has at his command a vast army of henchmen and soldiers. He hires the show windows of the candy stores with their goodies and tempting sweets; he hires the libraries and puts books with bad pictures and stories into them; he sits in the pool halls and club rooms; he hires the moving picture houses and flashes pictures on the screen, and he is forever whispering into your ears: "What are all the nice things for, if not for you to enjoy? Take and eat! . . . All good things come from God! . . ."

And what do our dear children do with regard to these temptations? Do they act like Mother Eve in Paradise, who listened to the serpent and ate of the forbidden fruit? Or do they follow the example of our Saviour in the desert: Begone Satan, I have neither time nor money; such things are not permitted!

The devil *is a clever fellow*, who knows you through and through, with all your faults and weaknesses. He knows exactly what this little boy and that little girl like best. He found out long ago that Johnny is very fond of muffins and he whispers into his ear: "Mother has got some money left in her pocket-book, take it; the muffins are so delicious; the baker did not get them from the devil, they came from God." And to Minnie, who likes doughnuts so well, he says:

"Mother is not here just now to see you! It is only right that not too many should be put on the table or else my brothers and sisters would eat so many that they get sick. . . ." The devil knows well that little fat William likes nothing better than a good long sleep and that blond Margaret likes to admire herself in the looking-glass. Therefore little fat William must pretend, at times, to have a headache, and blond Maggie is not to blame because looking-glasses and show windows seem to run after her. Indeed, my dear children, the devil knows you well. And you often follow him and do just what he tells you—is it not a shame? Do you call this bravery and courage? Cowards you are, scraping and catering to the devil! But just wait, all of a sudden he will change his tactics and grab you by the neck, and then it will be too late! Hence, treat the devil with contempt. Tell him: You scoundrel, you are not going to get me!

The devil can also play the pious gentleman whenever it suits his purpose; he can be like a fox in a monk's habit, preaching peace and good will to the chickens. If he is determined to seduce you to sin, he is as likely as not to say to you: "Praised be Jesus Christ!" And after he has seduced you, he says: "God bless you!" "Just go ahead and take that ring you found to the pawnshop and get some money for it; why should you worry? You go to confession every four weeks and so you will soon be rid of this sin again. . . . O Rosie, the candy is so good, take a piece, ah! just one more and another one, a few more for on the way! What of it? You've got your rosary with

you, haven't you? so on your way drop in at the church and say a few Hail Marys, and it will be all right. . . . And why should Pat not erase the bad mark on his report card? His father need not know that the teacher made an unjust report; is it not written in Holy Scripture: Thou shalt not give false witness? . . . And why should smart little Betsey not go to evening devotions? The last time she found a dollar bill in church! Of course, she gave some of it to the poor; this time she might find a five-dollar bill and get another and bigger box of chocolates. . . ."

See, children, how piously the devil can roll his eyes when tempting you. And you? You fall for his pious stuff and bid him join you in saying a Hail Mary, and then make yourself believe that you are an honest upright boy or girl!

A hundred years ago, at Mantua, in the land of Tyrol, Andreas Hofer, his country's liberator, was in sore distress. Around him stood three devils in general's uniform, smiling suavely: "You can hold a high position in our army, dear Sir, and attain to the highest honors. All we want you to do is to sign your name to this paper." There was a lie written on that paper. And what answer did Hofer give? "I will never buy my life with a lie!" And he offered himself to be shot in the fortress of Mantua. He triumphed over temptation.

My dear children! Temptations must come. But we should not descend from the mountain of temptation without making the good resolution: "I will firmly

resist and pray. God will help me, and therefore I pray: Lead us not into temptation!" Amen.

2. THE MOUNTAIN OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

(Second Sunday in Lent)

MY dear children: If you have paid attention to the reading of the gospel, you will know which mountain we will ascend to-day. It has a beautiful but lofty peak, the ascent of which will call for great exertion. It will not be a mere pleasure trip this time. But once we have reached the summit, a magnificent view will open unto us, a wonderful picture of dazzling splendor will present itself to our vision upon *Thabor, the mountain of the transfiguration*.

I will first tell you in a few words how our Divine Saviour came to make this journey with his three beloved disciples; and then we will join those holy men and ascend the holy mountain with them. We will answer three questions to-day:

- I. *Why did Christ ascend Mount Thabor?*
- II. *What is to be seen up there?*
- III. *What lesson do we learn from to-day's gospel?*

I

For over two years the Apostles had gone to school with the Saviour. They had heard His wonderful doctrines and seen His great miracles and had concluded

from what they had seen that Jesus was not an ordinary man, but the Son of God, hence, God Himself in the form of a man.

And what do you think they expected of the Saviour? They believed that Jesus would use His miraculous power to free their country from the Romans, who had occupied all the villages and cities and greatly oppressed the people. The Apostles thought that this would be a very easy thing for Jesus to do. He had with a single word calmed the terrific tempest on the lake and raised the dead to life,—surely He could use His miraculous power to expel the enemy from the country. The people would then make Him king, and Peter and James, His friends, would be made members of His cabinet or assigned to some other important office.

The Apostles expected this of the Saviour. But what did He do? He called His disciples together one day, and told them frankly just why He had come into this world. "I am going up to Jerusalem," He said, "not to be crowned king, but to suffer and die on the cross."

Can you imagine how frightened the Apostles were when they heard this! They could not get it into their heads. Peter said to Jesus: "Master, that will not happen!" He argued with the Saviour, and contradicted Him, so that Jesus finally grew angry and said: "Go away; you wish to tempt me; your thoughts are not the thoughts of God, but those of man! Your solicitude betrays you; you wish to rise in the world through me; you want me to make you powerful and rich. If that is what you are after, you may go. Whosoever de-

sires to be my disciple," he continued, "must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me" (Luke IX, 23). Hence, not secretaries of State, no, martyrs, cross-bearers, that is what the Apostles were to become, if they wished to be His disciples. Of course they were to receive a magnificent reward: "Whoever would lose his life for my sake, shall find it. . . . I shall render to each according to his work" (Matth. XVI, 25, 28).

Having spoken thus, Jesus waited to see whether His Apostles were ready to walk the way of the cross with Him, or whether they would run away. He waited six days, and behold! they were still faithful to Him. The Saviour was overjoyed and, as a reward for their fidelity, He planned a joyful surprise for them. Towards evening he took them on a journey to Thabor, the loveliest mountain in the land. There they were to see a picture so beautiful and so full of consolation that they would never lose faith in Him, even when, later on, they would see Him as the Man of Sorrows.

2

Engaged in conversation, the four holy men ascended the mountain. On reaching the summit, Jesus turned aside to pray. After He had prayed a while, the Apostles suddenly beheld a wonderful sight. A heavenly light shone around the Saviour and His garments became transparent and white as snow. Two venerable men were talking to Him about his Passion and death. The Apostles understood from their con-

versation that they were Elias and Moses, two great prophets whom they held in high esteem. And, O miracle! they distinctly heard a voice from Heaven, the voice of Almighty God, proclaiming: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear you him!" This was a glimpse of Heaven, as it were,—so beautiful that Peter, beside himself for joy, cried out: "O Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us build three tents and stay here forever!"

3

My dear children! What were the Apostles to learn from what they had heard and seen? Jesus wished to teach them two lessons, which they were to remember for the rest of their lives, namely:

1. That they should always be ready to deny themselves and patiently carry their cross if they wished to be His disciples;
2. That by denying themselves and carrying their cross they would merit a wonderful reward, namely, eternal joy and glory in Heaven.

Let us, too, dear children, take these lessons home with us on leaving the summit of Mount Thabor. If we want to be true Christians, loyal disciples of Christ, we must constantly exercise ourselves in self-denial and patiently endure crosses and sufferings. Our Divine Saviour said to all of us: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

He meant all men, and, hence, you too, my dear children. To deny ourselves and to bear our cross are things which we must learn in early youth, or else we shall never learn them at all. You practice self-denial, you carry your cross when, day after day, you overcome all those temptations with which the devil assails you. You take up your cross and follow Jesus if now, during Lent, you will at last conquer that predominant vice of children, the native weakness for sweets, and overcome that indolence and sloth which causes you so much trouble. It is quite a sacrifice for a little sleepy-head to rise promptly in the morning and to be in church in time for Holy Mass. You take up your cross if you refrain from saying anything that would be sinful or hurt others. You take up your cross when you resist temptations against holy purity, when you mortify your eyes so that they may not see everything, especially what is sinful.

Every cross, every act of self-denial, is designed by God to bring you a precious gain. Of course, it is true that in carrying our daily cross we must give up many things. We may not eat everything we like; we may not listen to everything we like to hear; we may not do everything we have a mind to; we may not sleep quite as long as we wish; we may not play quite as much as we desire. By doing these things we do lose something, it is true, but nothing great or worth while, only what is low and earthly. But instead we gain something higher and greater, something spiritual, something that is a thousand times more valuable. We gain spiritual liberty, piety, strength and firmness,

happiness, joy, and true peace of heart, the glory of Heaven and the eternal crown of victory.

And if our Saviour sends you real crosses and sufferings, such as sickness, want, sorrow, and death in your family, you may rest assured that He will follow them up with blessings and graces in this world and with unending bliss in eternity.

Dear children! Can you tell me who knows best how to comfort and help others? Those who have borne many hardships themselves. Do you know why those who seek comfort in their sorrow always come to the feet of the cross? Because they know that the Saviour has borne all our sorrows in His own body.

According to an old legend there was once an aged fiddler who, during a time of plague, was bereft of his wife and all his children in a single day. In his grief he came to our suffering Saviour and, kneeling beneath the cross, found comfort for his troubled soul. Later he set out on a journey through the world, entering the huts of the poor, sick and oppressed, singing to the wonderful strains of his violin and bringing peace and comfort into their wounded hearts. None who listened to him but went away consoled.

We can comfort others only if we have patiently borne affliction ourselves. We can strengthen others only if we ourselves have grown strong through suffering. It is through suffering that we grow strong, just as the oak tree gains strength in a storm. It is an everyday experience that children who have had to endure want and privation in their youth usually turn out to be the most efficient men and women in later life.

Yes, crosses and sufferings make us strong for this life and prepare our souls for the joys of Heaven.

Hence, dear children, be not disheartened if already in your early youth you are touched by the cares and tribulations of life. In the cross there is salvation; in the cross there is blessing; the cross leads us to glory. And if it grows heavy at times, raise your eyes out of this vale of tears up to the eternal Thabor of Heaven, which will be your final reward. Amen.

3. THE MOUNTAIN OF THE CROSS

(Third Sunday in Lent)

“And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified him. . . .” (Luke XXIII, 33.)

MY dear children! You are still dazzled by the light and splendor of the Transfiguration on Thabor's heights. To-day we behold Jesus dying on the cross. It is a most dreadful ascent which we have now to undertake to the bloody heights of Golgotha. “Alas, Father, we are so faint-hearted,” you say; “we are so afraid . . .” I know how you feel, my dear children, just as we all feel when we have to travel at night and our road leads close to a dark forest or a lonely cemetery; our hearts beat faster and faster, we feel numb and begin to shudder. . . .

But we must get to the top. We can easily find the road. A long trail of blood marks the path over which the Saviour has carried His cross. Alas, the road is

steep and stony. . . . At last we reach the summit, almost all out of breath; beneath us lies the city of Jerusalem, deadlly still, cowering like a dog who awaits the master's lash because of his disobedience.

Our hearts, my dear children, are oppressed by fearful forebodings, as we now ask ourselves these serious questions:

- I. *What do we see up there?*
- II. *What can we learn up there?*

I

On Mount Calvary we witness a drama, a tragedy, in which all that is horrible, all that is dreadful in the whole world conspires towards *the murder of God*.

This tragedy is divided into two acts. The first presents the *death of Jesus*, the second His *victory*.

First let us look a little more closely at the scene of the murder. The place is Mount Calvary, in Hebrew called *Golgotha*, meaning *place of skulls*. It is an elevation northwest of Jerusalem, which falls abruptly into the deep on one side. According to an ancient tradition, the skull of Adam, the father of the human race, is said to be buried here. The mountain itself is bald and barren, no shrubs, no grass, nothing but torn and barren rocks and rifts seeming to thirst for blood, the blood of God!

Suddenly the mountain grows alive. Men appear upon the scene. Commands are shouted: the frightful action of the murder of God begins. We are among

the spectators and look on in breathless suspense. The frantic mob gives way; a place is cleared in the center; Roman soldiers launch their spears against the curious crowds in an effort to push them back. The centurion, mounted on his steed, has an expression of gloom upon his countenance. Three crosses fall into the ground with a sickening thud. In the center of the clearing stands the Saviour, the pallor of death in His sacred countenance, exhausted, tottering, His kindly eyes full of grief. The executioners tear off His garments and throw Him, torn and bleeding, upon the cross. A shrill command: the executioners nail His body to the cross. The living flesh quivers, the blood spurts out, the Saviour moans in agony. We cannot bear to look on any longer; we close our eyes. . . . A new command jerks us back to the scene. The cross is set up. The Saviour's blood trickles down in big drops, forming a little stream that moistens the thirsty rock. And oh, how insolently and heartlessly the crowd is looking on! . . . The proud Pharisees sneer and mock, while the executioners indulge in coarse jests and cast lots for the Saviour's garments. . . . Only a very small group of men and women stands apart in silent grief. . . . And oh! His own beloved Mother must witness all this!

The light and heat of the noonday sun are still beating down upon the scene. Suddenly the crowd is hushed. Round about frightened, questioning faces grow pale with fear. . . . What has happened? Darkness is breaking in upon them. . . . Every minute the sky grows darker and darker. . . . The sun turns

blood red and then purple. . . . Black, awful night falls all around. . . . A dull, subterranean roar is heard in the mountains; the crosses tremble; the earth rocks and quakes. . . . Fiery red flashes of lightning zigzag across the lurid skies illuminating the night. . . . A wild scream of terror arises from the people; panic-stricken and insane with fear, they rush away from the scene. The tombs burst open; the dead come forth, like grey, transparent mists, and wander through the dark night. A loud cry, like the voice of thunder, rings through the night of death, a cry of victory from the parched lips of the dying Saviour: "*Consummatus est!* Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" He bows his head and dies. . . .

The second part of the sorrowful tragedy is at an end. The enemies of Jesus imagined themselves to be the conquerors. The Saviour is dead. But His death is really His victory, a victory over the death of sin. His death opened the gates of Heaven for us. Nature, the eclipse of the sun, the earthquake, all have proclaimed in powerful language the triumph of the Saviour! . . . No one remains under the cross but a few faithful friends and the Roman centurion, who gazes at the cross, deeply moved. He feels like we do. What he has heard and witnessed just now he proclaims to the whole world in a grand profession of faith: "Indeed, this was a just man, the Son of God!"

2

We are still standing beneath the cross, silent and filled with emotion. . . . It is growing daylight

again. . . . We slowly come to our senses, as if awakening out of an abominable dream. Meditatively we descend Mount Calvary, asking ourselves: "What lesson can we learn? What is the meaning of it all?"

My dear children! We have witnessed a very sad, soul-stirring tragedy which we will not forget so soon. For this drama is to us more, infinitely more, than a mere stage play. We are all actors in it, playing our rôle through life. By our sins and failings we helped to crucify our Divine Saviour. It was for our sins and failings that He shed His blood. Sorrow and gratitude grip our inmost hearts. But it is the Saviour's wish that this sublime tragedy of our redemption should continue among men, that we should always be reminded anew of His suffering and death for our salvation.

My dear children! You know people have tried at various times to reproduce the sacred life of our Divine Saviour and His bitter Passion and death upon the stage in the form of a play in which men and women reënact all the events that happened on Mount Calvary two thousand years ago. Chief among these plays is the Passion Play of Oberammergau. For the last decade the "Drama of the Passion" has also been staged in certain cities of our own country. All this may be very beautiful and edifying; but it is not the way our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to remember his Passion and death. No human being could worthily represent our Divine Saviour. We are all sinful creatures. We need something far better. Hence, the Saviour instituted a sublime drama which is enacted before

us day after day. In this drama *He Himself* is the chief actor, both as God and as Man, and repeats His death on the cross in an unbloody manner. I mean *the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*.

The only genuine Passion play is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If you only would understand this correctly, my dear children! You are told so much about it in catechism instructions, but your behavior during Holy Mass is often such that one is forced to ask: Do these children know and realize what takes place upon the altar?

The altar is Mount Calvary. From the beginning of Holy Mass to the Elevation the life and teachings of our Divine Lord are represented through the person of the priest. During this part of the Mass we sing and pray and listen devoutly to the sermon on the word of God, our Saviour's teaching. At the sound of the elevation bell silence reigns throughout the church, a deep, solemn silence. The organ is hushed, the singers fall on their knees. What we just witnessed on Mount Calvary happens all over again. When the little bell tinkles again, the priest raises up the Sacred Host. The snow-white Body of the Saviour hangs visibly on the cross. When the bell rings for the third time, you can hear the drops of His precious blood trickling slowly and heavily to the ground; the graves burst open again, the souls of the departed awake and are released. . . . And this sublime drama is repeated day after day, at every hour, all over the world, wherever there is a Catholic priest. And three hundred thousand times, day after

day, the cry echoes throughout an astonished world: "Indeed, this was a just man, the Son of God!"

Behold, dear children, the sublime drama of the Passion, the miracle of the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass! At the time of the Elevation, recollect yourselves, strike your breast, humbly and devoutly praying: "Jesus, for Thee I live; Jesus, for Thee I die; Jesus, I am Thine in life and in death!" You are Catholics. You should have so much love and understanding, my dear children, as not to miss Holy Mass through sloth or carelessness, and never assist thereat in an unbecoming or irreverent manner. At Holy Mass, kneeling on Mount Calvary, you are under God's protection, and if you are devout and attentive, God's blessing will descend upon you and accompany you throughout life.

In Togoland, deep in the African jungle, a bell rang from the steeple of a small frame chapel, summoning the Christians to Mass. Black figures, men, women, and children, came flocking from all directions. Mothers with their babies strapped to their backs, and old men, dragging behind with great difficulty. The little chapel could not hold them all. The missionary stood at the altar. Devout hymns, sung in the melodious tongue of the natives, ascended heavenward. . . . But out in the jungle death was lurking. When the *Sanctus* was over, and the colored altar boy had just rung the little elevation bell, a terrific war howl suddenly roared through the morning air out of the throats of a thousand black savages. A horde of Ewambo cannibals made an attack upon the

mission, swinging poisoned spears and knives, leaving no doubt that they meant death to all the Christians. They were on the point of rushing upon the terrified worshippers. Just then the elevation bell sounded. The Body of the Saviour was raised aloft. Instantly the savages halted. Paralyzed with terror, they stared at the Sacred Host—and then turned on their heels and ran for their lives. A converted Ewambo chief, who had taken part in the attack, later related that they had seen in the hands of the missionary a man hanging on the cross, all covered with blood, stretching out his arms towards them.

Thus the Body of the Saviour miraculously saved the lives of these black Christians.

My dear children! You also will be protected against the attacks of wicked men and the devil if you have great love, respect, and reverence for the Holy Sacrifice and continue to attend Mass with devotion. Amen.

4. MOUNT SION

(Fourth Sunday in Lent)

MY dear children! You have surely observed, at one time or another, how beautifully the sun sets on a clear evening. The whole firmament is ablaze, and long after the sun has disappeared behind the horizon, his glowing rays send loving greetings back to us.

We are going to contemplate to-day the sunset of the life of our dear Saviour, who called himself the light of the world. To this end we again ascend a

holy mountain,—this time the ancient, venerable Mount Sion. And again we answer two questions:

- I. *What do we see on this holy mountain?*
- II. *What lesson can we learn up there?*

I

My dear children! The holy mountain which we will ascend to-day lies within the holy city. A part of Jerusalem, the so-called upper city, is built upon it. Here at the time of our Saviour stood the house of a noble woman, the mother of St. Mark the Evangelist. It was the spacious hall of this house that our Lord entered on the evening before his Passion to celebrate the Pasch with His Apostles. In deep silence the Saviour and the Apostles took their seats around the big table. One could see from their saddened faces that gloomy forebodings were weighing upon their hearts. The Master himself seemed to be oppressed by grief and sorrow. He looked like a mother who is lying on her deathbed knowing that she must leave behind a wayward child. Soon He confided to the Twelve why He was worrying so much. He said to them: "One of you is about to betray me." These words struck them like lightning. Astonished they looked at one another and then asked the Master in turn: "Is it I, Lord?" Only one among them was silent,—a sinister figure, holding a money bag tightly in his hand. At last the eyes of all are fixed on Judas, but he, too, blandly turns to the Master and asks: "Is it I, Rabbi?" Jesus answers: "Yes"; and He adds:

"What you wish to do, do it soon!" Immediately Judas rushed out into the night to accomplish his foul purpose.

Within the hall the Saviour now was alone with His faithful friends. The hour of saying farewell had come. Jesus acted like a very dear friend towards His Apostles. He would not leave without having given them a token of His affection. He took bread into His venerable hands, blessed and broke it, gave it to His Apostles and said: "Take ye, and eat; this is my body." Then he took the chalice and, giving thanks, gave it to them and said: "Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood." With this he gave Himself to them. In his infinite love for us He would not only shed His blood and give His life for our redemption, but He also wanted to stay with us in a mysterious way here on earth as long as we were wanderers on the way to Heaven, in order to help us, to console us, and to be our sacrifice and nourishment on the journey through life, until we reached Heaven. Thus the hour of His farewell at the Last Supper is in reality the sunset of our Saviour's love for us, and ever since that hour the sun of his love sends its radiant farewells back to us, and will continue to do so even to the end of the world.

2

My dear children! What lesson can we learn from what we have witnessed on Mount Sion? The same thing that happened in the cenacle on Mount Sion is

being repeated every time you receive Holy Communion. In infinite love the self-same Saviour gives Himself to you as a nourishment for your souls in the same way as He gave himself to His Apostles. And every time this solemn hour arrives for you, two pictures impress themselves upon my imagination with irresistible force. Again and again I see before me the picture of Judas rushing out of the supper room, his mind filled with sinister thoughts; and underneath this picture I read the word "*Night!*" Opposite to this there is a delightful, consoling picture. There I see the Saviour with his faithful friends, lovingly giving them the Bread of Life; and underneath this picture I read the word "*Light!*"

Now tell me, dear children, which of the two pictures is the more beautiful, which one are you going to take for your model?

The picture of Judas should be an everlasting warning to you. Whosoever faithlessly separates himself from Jesus, and betrays Him, will, like Judas, rush out into the dark night of sin and crime, of unhappiness and misery. Every sin and act of unfaithfulness towards Jesus will bring night, want, and despair.

Do you want examples? Just recently a priest who is in charge of a prison told me that, within a few days, more than a dozen young people between fourteen and sixteen years of age were sent behind the bars. Nearly all of them had never been at Mass on Sundays and holydays, had never attended catechetical instructions and never received Holy Communion

since they had left school. They had separated from the Saviour and had been leading a life which ended in the night of prison and which most likely will end in an everlasting night. Greed and love of pleasure had driven them, like Judas, out into the night of sin and subsequent misery.

The picture of perfidious Judas must frighten you. The picture of light, the Saviour surrounded by his faithful friends, on the contrary, should admonish and inspire you. With the Saviour there is light and strength, genuine happiness and permanent peace of heart. If you start on life's journey in union with your beloved Saviour, choosing him for your friend, guide, and companion, you will always remain good and loyal and never wander astray into the dark paths of sin. And even if you should happen to go astray, like Peter, the light in the Saviour's kindly eyes will bring you back to Him.

As we descend the last holy mountain, let each one of us take home with him this resolution: "I will never be a Judas, I will never betray my Saviour, but remain faithful to Him unto death."

On a cold day in December, 1869, a squad of Russian soldiers came riding through Poland, where almost the entire population is Catholic. In the pine woods near a village they met a twelve-year-old boy gathering wood for his sick father. His mother had died long ago. The name of the boy was Nicholas. The officer in command, a cruel man, jumped from his horse, grabbed him by the neck and said: "What is your religion?" The boy answered promptly: "I am

a Catholic." The officer shouted: "Aha, you are one of those traitors who despise the czar and his religion and believe only what your pastor teaches you, you dog of an unbeliever, get down on your knees and make the sign of the cross according to the Russian rite!" By doing so Nicholas would have renounced his faith. The boy knelt down devoutly and made the sign of the cross after the Roman Catholic manner. This infuriated the savage Russian. He ordered the boy to be tied to a tree. Ten soldiers surrounded him in a half circle with their guns leveled at him, ready to shoot. The officer commanded: "Take aim!" But when he saw that the boy faced death bravely, he ordered the guns to be lowered and said: "You rebel Catholic, you are not worth the powder!" Then he commanded: "Tie a rope around his neck and hang him to the next tree!" The soldiers obeyed at once. After the boy had fainted, they cut him loose again and restored him to consciousness by the brutal blows of a lash. Whereupon they pushed him on with the butt ends of their bayonets to a frozen lake. Having broken a hole into the ice, they stuck the boy down to his arms into the ice-cold water. And now the officer asked again: "Will you renounce your faith?" "No," said the boy, trembling with fear and cold, "I am a Catholic, and I would rather freeze to death than deny my faith." The Russians turned purple with rage. They rushed together on to the ice. The officer had already drawn his sword and was on the point of splitting the boy's head, when suddenly the ice began to crack under their feet, and Nicholas with his cruel

tormenters sank down into the icy flood below. "Be faithful unto death," little Nicholas' mother had taught him years ago, and the boy remained faithful unto death!

I will be faithful to my Saviour unto death! I will never become a Judas and betray my holy faith! This must be our resolution for life. If you faithfully carry out this resolution, your life will not end in a gloomy night of despair, but will continue forever in a beautiful, everlasting life, with which our Divine Saviour will reward you when He shall say these words to you: "Because thou hast been faithful until death, I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. II, 10). Amen.

STEADFASTNESS AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

(Passion Sunday)

My dear children! Visiting the many cemeteries in the great city of Paris I saw in one of them a simple grave, the resting place of a first communicant. He died a martyr of innocence on his first Communion day. On his tombstone are written his name, the day on which he died, and the following words in letters of gold: "*Tarsicius dies, but he does not surrender.*"

My dear children! Last Sunday I spoke to you of the memorable hour of the Last Supper on Mount Sion. I put before you two pictures and you promised always to take the picture of light as your model, to remain faithful to your Saviour until death. You ought to renew this promise of uncompromising loyalty to

the Saviour after every Holy Communion and, above all, try to put it into practice in your everyday life. To assist you in carrying out this solemn promise steadfastly and under all circumstances, let me explain to you the meaning of the inscription on that tombstone.

Some years ago, in a small church in Paris, a venerable priest stood before a group of first communicants, whom he was preparing for the holiest moment in their lives. He spoke to them of the great dangers which lurk in the big cities and showed them how a Christian who carries the Saviour in his heart is able to resist these dangers with courage and constancy. Then he related to the children the well known, touching story of the martyr Tarsicius who, when barely thirteen years of age, during a fierce persecution courageously offered to carry the dear Saviour to his fellow-Christians in prison, who were to die the next day. Perhaps you already know what happened to him. He carried the Sacred Host wrapt in a linen cloth on his breast, his arms crossed over it. On his way to the prison he was stopped by a crowd of heathen boys. One among them, an apostate, knew at once what Tarsicius was carrying and urged his companions to rob the Christian boy of his God. But Tarsicius kept his arms firmly folded over his breast, and when the mob was about to use force, he spoke fearlessly: "I cannot, I dare not—I carry my God with me!" A few moments later he succumbed under the blows of his persecutors and fell dead to the ground. He had not surrendered his God, whom he was still carrying

under his folded arms. The priest related this incident to the children and exhorted them to-day, on their first Communion day, to make this good resolution: The more the world and sin press upon me, the more steadfastly will I cross my arms over my breast and guard my God within my heart and in times of temptations will speak like Tarsicius: "I cannot, I dare not—I carry my God with me!" The children's eyes were beaming as if they wanted to say to their pastor: Don't worry, we will remain true!

His heart was filled with joy and hope. The priest ascended the altar to pray and to offer up the Holy Sacrifice for his dearly beloved children. The moment drew near when the little bell summoned them to the Communion rail. With sacred joy he gave the Holy Eucharist to the little ones. But, standing before the last boy in line, his hand suddenly began to tremble; with a fervent prayer on his lips and somewhat hesitatingly he gave him Holy Communion. Why was he so troubled over this boy? The boy who was kneeling before him was the son of a burglar and widely known jail-bird. Hunger and misery shone out of his young eyes, but sin had also drawn sharp lines on his youthful features. Only a few days ago the father had come home from jail; his good mother had died long ago, heart-broken on account of the father's misdeeds and the misery and ruin he had brought upon the family.

Meanwhile the celebration had come to an end. The children left the church, joyfully hastening to embrace their beloved parents. But nobody was waiting for the son of the burglar. While all the rest went out, he

remained alone in a hidden corner of the church. The words of the priest had fallen like sparks of fire into his soul. Long after the others had gone, he went home too. When he entered the house, his father received him with words of scorn and began to scoff at the Holy Sacrament of the altar. And, children, what do you think the father wanted the boy to do on his first Communion day? He wanted him to assist the following night in a carefully planned burglary. There was a rich old man living all alone somewhere in the neighborhood, whom the father had resolved to rob. The boy was to lie down on the doorsteps of the old man's house pretending to be asleep and give his father a sign in case the police should get wind of it and try to interfere. The boy had done very well on similar occasions in the past and to-day his father relied on him again. But how dumbfounded he was when the boy said: "I cannot, I dare not, father!" In a fit of anger the father began cursing the priest, who, as he said, had ruined his son and raved so furiously that the boy had to hide himself in a dark corner of the room. But in spite of terrible threats the boy remained firm, repeating again and again: "I cannot, I dare not do this, even if you kill me; because I carry my God within my heart!" This remark roused the father's awful fury. Assailing the boy, he beat him with his coarse fists until the blood spurted out of his nose and mouth. Only when he heard the neighbors coming into the room, he quit and fled. Seeing the boy lying on the floor in a dying condition, they sent at once for the priest. As he entered the room, the boy once more

opened his eyes and said: "Father, everything is in order, I did not surrender!" Shortly after the young hero died. Rarely was a bigger crowd seen at any funeral than that which attended the burial of this boy. The workmen of the district in which Albert had lived erected a little monument over his grave and engraved on it the inscription which I quoted to you at the beginning: "Tarsicius dies, but he does not surrender."

My dear children! This little boy was a hero to whom you can look up with sincere admiration. Learn a lesson from him! And you, dear parents, learn from this story how the Saviour can transform the heart of a child. Let your smaller children make their first Communion as early as possible, supposing, of course, that they have the right understanding of this holiest of all Sacraments. This is, no doubt, the best way to fortify them against the dangers that surround them in a big city like ours. And you, children, act in hours of temptation like our little hero and say: "I cannot, I dare not, because I carry my God within my heart!" One should be able to write also upon your tombstone later on: "Tarsicius dies, but he does not surrender!"

EASTER JOYS

(Easter Sunday)

My dear children! Did you go out into the fields and forests during the bright sunny days of last week?

And did you have your ears and eyes wide open? Who nodded its golden head so pleasantly from out the soft moss to greet you? The March marigold. "God keep you, my child, come and see, I am unlocking mother earth to let cheery spring come up." And who is the little musician caroling so joyously from the tree tops and in blooming hawthorn hedges? Robin red-breast, to be sure. "Hello! God keep you, little sleeper! Have you wakened from your sleep? Come and join me if you know how to sing, we are greeting happy spring." And what mysterious painter is that who so lavishly decorates woodlands and meadows, adorning them each night with richer and more smiling green? He is the great artist Spring, putting nature in trim for the most glorious festival of Christendom. Even our church steeple looks joyful to-day in the golden morning sun. It knows, you see, that at 9 o'clock all the dear children of the parish will come walking up the main aisle with beaming eyes and joyful hearts and new garments to rejoice over the Saviour's triumphant resurrection from the dead. My dear children! I feel as if our church with its stained glass windows and beautifully decorated altars and statues were jubilantly exclaiming: "Christ is risen! He is free from the bondage of death and triumphantly looks down upon the grave."

Why do we rejoice so greatly on this Easter festival, my dear children?

- I. *Because our Saviour rose from the dead.*
- II. *Because He has reopened Heaven for us.*

I

Yes, dear children, we rejoice because the Saviour rose from the dead.

The dark night lay sweetly dreaming over our Saviour's sepulchre in the rock, when suddenly a bright sunbeam peeped over the mountains of Palestine and pierced the heart of night, and night had to die. The new, golden day won. Very softly the trees whispered their secret to the morning breeze, shaking their solemn heads in astonishment at the sleeping guards near the grave. Suddenly there came a mighty crash, the rocks trembled and quaked, the awed morning breeze held its breath. The heavy tombstone fell athundering to the ground. An angel in snow-white garments sat upon it. Brilliant light poured out of the rock-monument. With a shout of terror the guards fell to the ground amid the clanking and rattling of their heavy armor. The Saviour came forth in radiant majesty. The glorious Easter morning had begun. And what a morning! Never before was there a daybreak as beautiful as this one.

My dear children! Come let us join the pious women and the Apostles Peter and John and hurry with them to the tomb to see what has happened there. Two angels at the entrance greet us with a smile. Questioningly we stop before them. "You seek the Saviour? He is not here, he is risen from the dead. Behold, the sepulchre is empty." Really? Is it possible? But he was dead! Most certainly, my dear children, let us

believe what the angels say, for angels do not lie!

"Thanks be to God!" we exclaim with jubilant voices. Now the awful night is past. Away now with sad faces and mournful songs! Away with black drappings and empty altars! Put on fresh, fragrant flowers and lighted candles, for this is Easter day. To-day we are celebrating a triumphant festival. Our Saviour has conquered death. He is stronger than the strongest giant in the whole world and more powerful than death. Now the bells may ring again which were so quiet and mute; the organ can sing again which kept such mournful silence; now we may laugh and rejoice again after weeping at the Saviour's tomb. Alleluja, Jesus is risen from the grave!

2

You ask me, dear children, why the Resurrection of our Divine Lord is such a joyful event for us! I can tell you that: The Saviour reopened Heaven for us by His Resurrection. How so? That you will soon understand.

I could call you together and say: "Children, will you come along with me? I will guide you to a wonderful, magic castle far away. But you must follow me on a dangerous and difficult road." We set out now. Up the mountain, through a dense, dark forest, past yawning abysses and frowning gulches, from which serpents hiss and dragons spit, ever onward, ever deeper into the frightful wilderness. You become afraid and think: "He is gone astray, he does not know

the way. Who will save us out of this awful place?" And while you are thus thinking and worrying, there suddenly opens unto us a bright clearing, and upon a high cliff stands a ravishing mansion with a thousand and one golden towers and verandas glittering in the rays of the evening sun. You shout and yell for joy. You see now that we were on the right road.

Our Saviour shows us the way to Heaven. He leads us through the bloody wilderness of the way of the cross, through the awful night of death on Good Friday. The Apostles too were terribly frightened; they thought they were lost and done for. Then suddenly the Saviour stood before them, alive and glorified. Do you believe now that the Saviour has shown us the right way to Heaven? Hence, should we not rejoice?

We all will and must walk this road, my dear children; it is the way of death. Riding on horseback through the Serbian mountains I once came through a fearful valley called Smertnidoline, which means, valley of death. It does not bear that name for nothing. Sky-high cliffs all around, thundering water-falls, greedy vultures circling in the air above. A narrow trail winds upwards toward a dark tunnel. Dull and hollow is the sound of our footsteps as we approach it. At the exit, however, a fascinating picture greets the eye: the view of the charming green Morawa valley with many flourishing towns and villages. We all, my dear children, must traverse the valley of death. But we need not fear. We know that our Saviour has conquered death and taken away its terrors.

At the end of this valley of death there is a golden door, the entrance to Heaven. And there we shall meet our Saviour, and He will open the door for us. Should we not, then, rejoice and be glad?

Night is always full of terrors for us. At times it grows dark also in the soul. When the devil, this nocturnal prowler, this lover of darkness, puts out the lights in our soul by sin, then the soul dies and is enveloped in darkness. But the Saviour comes and turns on the lights again in Confession and Holy Communion. Is it not so, dear children? How joyously and freely you breathe every time after you have made a good confession and received Holy Communion worthily! Divine light floats through your soul. Since the Saviour is risen from death, we also must rise from the death of sin. It is not enough to have new garments and freshly washed hands and faces, we must also have a clean conscience and a pure heart. Tell me, is it really Easter within your hearts? *If so, be glad and rejoice.*

Jaggelo was indeed a poor boy. His parents were rich mill-owners, but he was blind from birth. People felt great compassion for him whenever they saw him sitting in front of the house playing with his teddy bear in the bright sunlight, because he could not see anything. He had often expressed a wish to see the sun. His heavenly Father granted his wish. Jaggelo grew ill and lay dying on his bed. When the priest, who had quickly prepared him for his first Communion, gave him the Sacred Host, the little boy for the first time opened his eyes. A ray of joy beamed forth from

them, and his dying lips asked: "Is that the sun? Oh, how beautiful!" Peacefully smiling he lay there, as his youthful soul winged its flight towards the eternal Sun. My dear children! The Saviour through His Resurrection from the dead brought the divine light into the world. Hence, it can never grow dark within you as long as true Easter joy dwells in your hearts. Amen.

THE CHILDREN'S FIRST COMMUNION

(First Sunday after Easter)

"I am coming quickly; hold fast what thou hast, in order that no one seize thy crown." (Apoc. III, 11.)

My dear children! "Winter is now past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared in our land!" With these joyful words the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles (2, 12) jubilantly welcomes the arrival of spring. The same words echo in the hearts of us all to-day as we celebrate a spring festival for the souls of our first communicants. The rough, cold winter of sin has been banished from their hearts by the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance and has given place to the spring of sanctifying grace. The divine and moral virtues are now blossoming like sweet, fragrant flowers in their hearts and are exhaling a delightful perfume of faith, hope, and charity, of humility, purity, and fervor. To this interior preparedness corresponds your exterior appearance. The neat clothes together with the flowers, wreaths, veils and badges which you wear reflect in a most fitting

manner the splendor and beauty of your souls. Now, then, you are ready to receive the Heavenly Bridegroom. However, before He enters your hearts this morning, He has a few impressive words to say to you, to your parents and to the others here present. To you he says: "*I am coming quickly!*" Your dear parents He exhorts: "*Hold fast what thou hast!*" and all the rest here present He warns: "*Let no one seize thy crown!*"

How happy must those children have been whom the Saviour called to Himself with the words: "Suffer the little children to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such!" Those children were privileged to look into His kindly eyes, to rest on His bosom, to experience His tender caresses and blessings! How happy Zacheus must have been when the Master, on entering his house, said to him: "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke XIX, 9). And yet, a far greater happiness awaits you to-day. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, whose face the angels long to see; Jesus Christ, the eternal sun of the blessed; Jesus Christ, the author and giver of all graces; Jesus Christ, in whose name all knees bow low: He it is who comes to you to-day. He makes his abode in your hearts: "Behold, I am coming quickly!"

Merely to feel this great happiness on your first Communion day, however, will be of no value to you unless you benefit by it. Of course, you are sincere to-day in your love for Jesus. With only a few exceptions you have all been doing well during the time of preparation and have tried to please Him by your

eagerness and good behavior. Now it is up to you to persevere and to build upon the foundation which the Saviour, the living corner-stone, is laying in your heart to-day. To be fervent and zealous under the watchful care of a priest during the time of preparation for first Holy Communion is certainly good and praiseworthy. But it is from now on that you will have to prove your virtue and loyalty in the warfare of everyday life! Do you remember what St. Peter said immediately after his first Communion in the cenacle: "Master, although all shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized!" He, the first communicant, promised uncompromising loyalty and was somewhat offended when Jesus said to him: "Amen I say to thee, that in this night before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice!" But it came true.

I have had experience with not a few children who, like you to-day, promised and renounced with the best of intentions, but nevertheless became unfaithful shortly after. Influenced by bad comrades, they missed Mass on Sundays, neglected the monthly Communion, committed shameful actions and became a disgrace to their families. Children, whenever temptations of this kind assail you, let them not prevail, but think of this solemn hour and keep your word to your Saviour! Solemnly vow at this hour that you will always remain loyal to Jesus.

The cruel Roman Emperor Licinius on one occasion ordered forty Christian soldiers to be tortured for their faith. After they had been stripped of their garments, they were placed on a frozen lake and con-

demned to lie there naked until they froze to death. Near the shore there was a warm bath prepared for those among them who might want to save themselves by denying Christ. The heroic squad was undismayed and with one voice cried to God: "Lord and Saviour, forty have come to combat; grant that forty may be crowned! Let none of us lose his crown!" At this moment the heathen guard on the shore saw them surrounded by a heavenly light; an angel hovered over their heads, distributing thirty-nine crowns among them. Seeing this the guard thought: "Are they not forty in all; I wonder what happened to the fortieth!" At the same instant one of the forty rushed to the shore into the warm bath, to the great sorrow of his companions. Without a moment's hesitation the guard then, inspired by the grace of God, hastened on to the ice and joining the thirty-nine martyrs, was slain together with them. Finally, only the youngest among them was still alive, lying there with broken limbs. His mother hurried to his side and exhorted him: "My child, be steadfast and persevere, Christ is standing before the door!" And while the corpses of the martyrs were being carried away to be burned, the mother followed them with her dying son in her arms and placed him with his dead brethren that he might receive the crown of victory together with them. See, children, such was the loyalty of the first Christians! You, too, are soldiers of Jesus Christ, fighting the good fight; for you, too, the crown of glory is waiting in Heaven. There is only one condition, and that is, you must hold fast to your faith and your Chris-

tian principles and stick to them through thick and thin!

"I am coming quickly; hold fast what thou hast!" These words are meant for you, dear fathers and mothers! Your hearts are beating faster to-day and exulting with joy. Their children's happiness is the highest aim of parents, the one thing a mother dreams of even at the cradle of her darling. Hence you cannot be indifferent towards the true happiness which is being imparted to your children to-day. Hold fast what you have! Do not forget that while solicitude for your children's temporal welfare is good, nay, necessary, it is by no means the most important thing. You are Christians, and as such must not see in your children flesh and blood only, but what is of infinitely greater value than flesh and blood, that is, their immortal soul, the image and likeness of God. According to Holy Scripture, one immortal soul is worth more than the whole universe. We also read there: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his soul?" What will it profit your children if you care only for their body? What will it profit them if through your toil and care they become successful business men, but lose their virtue and the fear of God! Hence, keep on training their soul, stress the necessity of daily prayer at home, regular attendance at the Sunday Mass and at least monthly reception of Holy Communion. Be mindful of your responsibility before the triune God,—the Father, who created your child for Himself and has until now preserved it; the Son, who cleansed it in Baptism and will nourish

it for the first time this morning with His own flesh and blood; and the Holy Ghost, whose living temple your child is. Your children are God's own property, and you are only stewards. "Son of man," says Almighty God through the mouth of his prophet, "I have made thee a watchman to the house: and thou shalt hear the word out of my mouth, and shalt tell it them from me" (Ezech. III, 17). And St. Paul exhorts: "If any man provideth not for his own, and especially for his family, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. V, 8).

There are reasons a-plenty for you, dear parents, to hope that your children, as they kneel here to-day in the garment of sanctifying grace, will realize all the hopes you set in them; but there is a dangerous period ahead of them. Mighty foes lie in ambush for them; left to themselves in these dangerous years, they will not be able to resist the numerous temptations of our wicked age. They need your help, your example, and your admonitions. Do not, Christian parents, abdicate your parental rights and duties, your God-given authority, for which He will hold you responsible. Keep the reins in your own hands with firmness and understanding love. Do away with this stupid inconsistency of letting your sons and daughters have their own way as soon as they earn their own money and pay their board! Do not play the rôle of a silent watchdog when it is your duty to raise a warning voice against insubordination, prodigality, and vice. On the other hand, sons and daughters growing to maturity resent being tied to their mother's apron strings and treated like

infants; they must be trained to make the right use of liberty and to show steadfastness of character. This truth is doubtless sponsored by the Apostolic admonition: "Fathers, do not irritate your children, that they may not lose heart." (Col. III, 21.) In educating and training their children parents must, so to speak, keep on a level with and grow up with them.

And now a word to the rest of you here present! "*Let no man seize the crown of these children!*" When our Divine Lord one day found himself surrounded by a bevy of children and His eyes sparkled with joy at the thought of their innocence, a shadow crept suddenly over His benign countenance, and with holy earnestness he turned to the assembled multitude and said: "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you, their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. . . . But whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were profitable for him that a great millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea!" (Matth. XVIII, 10, 6.) Can you blame me for repeating the Saviour's words to you, when I think of the dangers these hopeful children will have to meet in this wicked world? Blessed Albertus Magnus is said to have worked over thirty years on an automaton that could move itself. One day his pupil, St. Thomas Aquinas, entered the laboratory and touched the machine, which instantly began to move. Frightened to death at this mysterious sight, he ran after the automaton and destroyed it. When Albertus Magnus saw the destruction of his

labors, he cried out sorrowfully: "You have destroyed in a single moment the work of over thirty years!" Seducer, do you realize what takes place in the heart of the triune God when you destroy His most artistic work,—the soul of an innocent child! Watch your tongue in the presence of little children! Do not mar their innocence in word or deed; "their angels in heaven always see the face of their Father who is in heaven." Bear in mind that we must all co-operate in bringing up a healthy future generation, healthy not only in body, but also, what is even more important, in soul.

And now, dear children, the word will come true: "I am coming quickly!" The moment of your first Holy Communion is fast approaching. I have only one more request to make to you: Pray fervently for your dear parents and your benefactors who have made so many sacrifices for you! Pray for your priests and teachers, who have trained and prepared you for to-day's great event! Amen.

TRUE AND FALSE JOY

(Second Sunday after Easter)

"Why are you sad?" (Luke XXIV, 17.)

MY dear children! "Alleluia! This is the day which the Lord has made, let us exult and be glad on it!" In these words the Church bids us rejoice at Easter time. The day after His Resurrection our Lord asked two of His Apostles: "Why are you sad, when the

whole world should rejoice?" I have already explained to you the reason why we should rejoice during Easter time: Because our Beloved Saviour arose from the dead. The whole Easter season, therefore, is a time of joy and gladness. But for you Easter is not the only time for rejoicing. Your young lives should always be brimful of mirth and happiness. You are in the midst of the golden days of childhood and youth, which older folks recall with wistful tenderness as the happiest time of their lives. You are living in the springtime of life. But, children, is it real spring weather when sun does not shine? Look, what the sunlight is to spring, that joy is to youth. Joy is the sun in the sky of blissful childhood. Of course, my dear children, you know that there are different kinds of joys in this world, joys which end in tears, and joys which leave a blissful remembrance. Hence, it might be a good thing to preach a special sermon on joy to-day. My sermon should serve as:

- I. *A warning against false joy and*
- II. *Point out to you the way of true joy.*

I

Holy Scripture contains an exhortation which should be well remembered by those who imagine that one must make a sour face in order to be pious: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice." (Phil. IV, 4.) You should rejoice because joy is as necessary for you as sunshine is to flowers. Have you ever noticed how the most beautiful flowers wither if it rains into

their blossoms? So it is with children who must weep much and who are deprived of the sweet sunshine of joy. Hence a great poet said: "Oh, banish tears from children's eyes; this constant rain of tears is harmful to sensitive blossoms." Blossoms and children's hearts need not an abundance of rain, no, no, they need plenty of sunshine and sweetness if they are to grow beautiful and be healthy. Therefore a lot of sun and light must penetrate the fibres of your heart, but the right sun, the right light, genuine joy, not false enjoyment which ends in tears and misery. A story will show you what I mean.

When Francis Joseph was a care-free student, he was given a very fascinating story book from the college library. In the evening, just as he had gotten to the most interesting part of the story, his mother closed the book and made him go to bed. But Francis knew how to help himself. He waited until the house was quiet; then he got up, sneaked into the room where the book lay, lit the candle that stood on the table near his bedside and, sitting up in bed, continued to read. Suddenly he heard a strange buzzing around his light. Looking up, he saw one bespangled night beetle after another coming through the open window out of the pitch-dark garden into his room and fluttering around the candle light. Faster and faster they danced around it, until the flame singed their tender wings. In a few seconds the glittering splendor of the stupid beetles was reduced to a little heap of ashes. "If they aren't the most stupid things in existence," ejaculated the sharp-witted student, watching the death dance,

"the whole day long they hide themselves shyly from the sunlight and at night they come and dance around a miserable tallow candle until they drop dead." So thought the wise student and turned to his book again, but his eyes were heavy with sleep and his head slipped back on the pillow, which in the meantime had rolled close to the candle flame. Suddenly he awoke. He had dreamed his bed was burning. The room was filled with dense smoke and flames had scorched his pillow. A great fear gripped him; he shouted for his parents, who arrived just in time to smother the flames with a heavy carpet and so saved the boy from a fate similar to that of the night beetles of which he had said: "They are the most stupid things in existence!"

How many people resemble the night beetles about which you just now heard! They do not see the beautiful joys of the day and instead run madly after the deceitful pleasures of the night, until they land in misery. How many children, like Francis Joseph, must learn from bitter experience that forbidden pleasures only bring woe and regret! One or the other among you might be tempted by the nice red Easter-rabbits in the stores to steal your mother's money;—oh, such joy has a bitter after-taste, even if it be only in later years when you are locked up as a thief, or when you are discharged by your employer because you cannot be trusted. And even now your conscience is spoiling your joy, by whispering into your ear: "You are a thief!" But a far more severe punishment awaits the child who indulges in sinful pleasures. Such a child always reminds me of a thirsty traveller who ignores

the clear, healthful waters of a bubbling spring and quenches his thirst in broken cisterns full of filth and dirt, or in mud-puddles or wells where others wash the dust off their feet, where cattle drink and dangerous disease germs lurk in the dregs.

2

Dear children! Heed the warning against forbidden and polluted pleasures, learn to seek only real and genuine joys in this life! The butterfly flitting so gayly in the bright light of day, ever soaring towards the sun, will never actually reach the sun and thus the sunlight will never singe its wings. So it is also with genuine joys: we shall never fully possess them, never get our fill of them, hence genuine joy can never do us any harm.

Follow the promptings of your young hearts in responding to the glad call of joy. Wander with your parents out into the beautiful garden of nature which God has planted for your sake. Roam upon the paths winding over mountains and hills, meadows and woodlands. Look for lofty pleasures which you will always love to remember. These are pure and noble joys, that expand body and soul. And nearly as great is the joy we find in works of art fashioned by highly gifted artists. You are filled with wonder in beholding beautiful churches and historic monuments. Do they not teach you to imitate such virtues as heroism, devotion to duty, loyalty to God and country? And those great steamers sailing over rivers and lakes, do they not

exhibit the wonderful skill and energy of gifted men and thus are a source of thrilling joy for you? What innocent and well-earned joy you experienced at the last commencement exercises when the boys in a fine play were heroes on the stage and the girls were rainbow fairies and winged angels! You had a jolly good time. Always keep to such innocent and lofty amusements instead of frequenting dubious performances, which bring the blush of shame to your cheeks.

All the joys which nature, art, and music can offer are far excelled by that joy of which our holy religion is the source. Look about you! Here in our church art and nature harmoniously unite in glorifying God and bringing joy to His children. Hence your religious exercises here in the house of God are not a hard task, ah no, on the contrary, they are a source of love and joy. And the feasts we celebrate are days of joy never to be forgotten. How happy you are especially on your first Communion day, when Jesus enters your youthful heart for the first time! Of one joy I still have to tell you, it being one of the most blessed of all joys—the joy you feel after you have done your duty.

My dear children! In the Alps there is a flower which grows only on the highest peaks and near inaccessible clefts. Only at the risk of life and with strenuous efforts tourists sometimes succeed in plucking this beautiful Alpine rose, called *Edelweiss*, which they enjoy for many years. Thus there are also rare joys, beautiful roses which can be won only through great efforts, sacrifices and struggles. But once you

have won them, you will enjoy them as much as the tourist treasures his Edelweiss. Such an Edelweiss blossom is a good report card at school and the consciousness of having kept a pure heart for the day of your first Holy Communion. Ah yes! This joy shines in children's eyes as long as sin, this burglar of the night, does not intrude into the paradise of the soul and steal its most precious treasure.

My dear children! Mark this well: Sin with its alluring promises of pleasure is in truth the meanest joy-killer. Avoid it by all means and seek only those joys which do not end in tears.

It is related of St. Philip Neri that, even as a priest and an old man, he would often take part in children's games. When morose people began to scold them for the racket they raised, the little boys and girls, like singing birds scared away by night owls, would come and take refuge with the Saint, and he would say to them: "O children, let them growl as much as they wish; go ahead with your game, only do not commit sin!"

Of another Saint it is related that he was playing at ball with his friends, when the conversation suddenly drifted to the subject of death. One after another told what he thought he would do should his last moment arrive. And what do you think the Saint said? "I would calmly continue to play, for I began this sport for the greater honor of God."

My dear children! Try to remember these two stories. You may and must enjoy yourselves, and there is no harm done if at times you are a bit noisy and

uproarious. But you must never sin! Your games must be such that you may calmly continue in them even if death should suddenly approach you. You need not fear death—what can death do to you but lead you to never-ending happiness with your Saviour in Heaven. Amen.

ADVICE TO YOUNG MEN

(Third Sunday after Easter)

“Act like men and be strong!” (1 Cor. XVI, 13.)

MY dear young men! Holy Scripture relates an incident that must fill the heart of every young man with satisfaction: I mean the combat between little David and the giant Goliath. Who among you has not listened with rapt attention to this story when hearing it for the first time in school? Even now, in your riper years, this story, far from having lost any of its interest, has become even more attractive because of the many important lessons it contains, all of which I may sum up in the words of St. Paul: “*Act like men and be strong!*” Two armies confronted each other at that time, and two men assumed the responsibility for their respective peoples. But how unequal were the strength and the weapons of the duellants, how opposite the motives urging them to fight! Like a second David, you, too, are confronted with hostile forces of giant proportions. How unequal are the weapons, how opposite are the compelling motives on either

side! Like David of old the young Christian to-day challenges the ever-growing army of his enemies: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (1 Kings XVII, 45).

Young David knew that the decisive hour for his people had come, and this thought inspired him with a sense of responsibility for himself, his family, and his nation. His courage grows into heroism, he acts like a man and is strong. He knows the source of his strength: "In the name of the Lord of hosts" he goes forth to fight, and like a benediction from the mouth of his Lord sound the words: "Go, the Lord be with you!" "Act like a man and be strong," my dear young man. For you, too, the decisive hour has come. Childhood is a thing of the past for you. How often do you boast: "I am no longer a child!" If you mean that you have become conscious of your responsibility and wish in all seriousness to shoulder this responsibility, then good luck to you! If you mean to say that henceforth you will endeavor to deepen and widen the foundation of faith within you, that you will strengthen the moral virtues and principles within you, and that with the growth of your body you will cultivate a strong religious character, then good luck to you! You know and feel responsible for what is best and most beautiful and most essential in life: your moral and religious character, your growing to be a Catholic man.

These are decisive hours for every young man, hours of wrestling, of fighting to the blood for the

Kingdom of Heaven that is in you, namely, your soul. It is a giant who scoffs at you, a world estranged from God, aided by bad habits and insatiable passions within you. "Act like a man and be strong." Your guardian angel will assist you, as he assisted Jacob in his decisive hour. An angel in the form of a man, as you may remember, wrestled with Jacob until daybreak, but could not overcome him. At last Jacob called on him: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The angel responded: "Thy name shall not be called Jacob, but Israel," that is, soldier of God; and he blessed him. (Deut. 32, 24.)

You, too, are "soldiers of God." What an honor! And what confidence Almighty God places in you! Do you always show yourselves worthy of this confidence? Are you always and everywhere—at home and at work, at play and at rest, in cheerful and in sad hours—mindful of the responsibility you have for your soul, the Kingdom of Heaven within you? Do you always promptly heal the wounds which your soul receives in battle by a worthy reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist? To you, too, does God address the words: "I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose therefore life, that both thou and thy seed may live: and that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and obey his voice, and adhere to him," "that thou mayest dwell in the land of promise" (Deut. XXX, 19-20).

Man is bound up by a thousand invisible ties with

his family. This relation imposes up on him a second responsibility. "Act like a man and be strong" is the challenge of his family unto him. A mere child knows no responsibility. Father and mother provide for him, and he sits down at a well covered table without even asking whence all the good things come. Not so the boy growing into manhood. One of the greatest industrial magnates of our time tells that when he was a boy of fourteen his dying father called him to his bedside and told him: "My son, you are the oldest boy in the family; the responsibility of providing for your mother and your brothers and sisters will now rest upon your shoulders; and also the responsibility of managing the firm which your father has founded and in the development of which he has spent the best years of his life." These words touched the heart of the fourteen-year-old boy and awakened in him a consciousness of that weighty responsibility of which his dying father spoke. Almost overnight he became a man. He studied and planned, toiled and labored day and night until the boy in him was conquered and the lad had grown into manhood.

This hour has also come for you. You are to assume your portion of responsibility for the welfare of the family to which you belong, you are to help your father and mother provide for and train your younger brothers and sisters, you are to feel responsible for the honor and prestige of the family. The good name and economic prosperity of your family must be as secure in your keeping as in that of your parents.

This, of course, requires energy and strife on your part, and a certain number of moral virtues, such as a well developed sense of honor, a high sense of duty and love of righteousness. The transformation of a care-free youth into a sterling man is something unspeakably holy, a kind of consecration. Only an infamous coward would spend this sacred period of his life in idleness and pleasure-seeking! The noble-hearted Tobias, living in exile among the Assyrians, more than two thousand years ago, "forsook not the way of truth," according to the words of Holy Scripture. What a fine sense of responsibility he had for his faith and his soul! Although he was younger than any other member of the tribe, he acted like a man. And when God, to test his faith, struck him with blindness, he remained unshaken in his loyalty and thanked God all the days of his life. "We are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those who never change their allegiance to him." How deep must have been the devotion of this young man to his family, how sincere and cordial his affection for father and mother! Or else the dear old mother would not have welcomed her returning son with such beautiful greetings, calling him "light of our eyes," "staff of our old age," "comfort of our life," "hope of our posterity." Would that the last sentence of this precious book of Holy Scripture, the book of Tobias, might also come true in your life: "All his kindred, and all his generation continued in good life, and in holy conversation, so that they were acceptable both

to God, and to men, and to all that dwelt in the land."

Your third and last responsibility is to your fellow-citizens, to your country, and to your church. The future of these will depend on you, the young generation. However, you will not be able to give them your undivided allegiance in manhood unless you begin to realize now your responsibility for the welfare of nation, country, and church. To this end you will have to study the constitution and the laws of this threefold community, you will have to become acquainted with the duties of their members and take an active interest in their problems. Play, sports, theatres, and travels shall not be denied you, but always remember that by indulging in them you may benefit yourselves, but do not contribute anything to the common weal. What you ought to be interested in is the Catholic press, the great social, political, and religious questions of our time, always taking your stand with those who do not seek party interests or class distinction, nor support brutal force and power, but foster justice, peace, and the common welfare. In this way you will serve both your own best interests and the common good. For a Catholic young man to serve the common good means manfully to do his duty, which he has inherited from his father and is bound to discharge towards his descendants. It means to serve God, which is for him the noblest exercise of his religious and moral vocation. Act manfully, then, and be strong, fight the good fight, and the victory will be yours. Amen.

BE A SOLDIER OF CHRIST!

(Fourth Sunday after Easter)

MY dear children! The great feast of Pentecost is at the door. Therefore to-day's Gospel mentions the coming down of the Holy Ghost. You know why the Holy Ghost was sent down upon the Apostles. He was to strengthen and encourage them in going forth into a hostile world to preach the Gospel of Christ to all nations. You can readily understand that this required great courage. Nearly all the Apostles died for Jesus. They are the first great martyrs who fought bravely for the cause of the Saviour. At the approach of Pentecost we are vividly reminded each year of these great heroes of our Church. We must all be heroes of the faith, soldiers of Christ. I am going to show you to-day how you may become heroes of the faith, how you may exhibit courage and strength in defending your faith even in the days of youth. I say: If you want to become a hero of the faith and a soldier of Christ, you must,

- I. *Train yourselves for the fight;*
- II. *Be brave and victorious in the fray.*

I

My dear children! You must all strive to become brave soldiers of Christ. Even the girls are to be en-

rolled for this military service, not only as nurses, no, as fighters in the front rank, and to this end they, too, must learn to handle the weapons of the faith just as well as the men. Before a soldier is sent to the battlefield, he has to be drilled in the use of arms. The army discipline is rather strict and the military rules must be obeyed even to the smallest detail. Only after the soldier has been thoroughly trained and knows how to obey and to handle his weapons, is he sent to the front.

My dear children! Do you know where you are trained to be heroes of the faith and soldiers of Christ? It is in religious instructions. There you learn to know and to handle the weapons with which you are to defend yourselves and attack the enemy in battle. A good Christian child delights as much in these instructions as a true soldier does in arduous drilling. I am glad that the pupils of the eighth grade are taking such great interest in these instructions. Their eyes beam with fighting courage whenever I show them how to wield the sword of faith against treacherous enemies. I enjoy giving them a line of attack against an imaginary adversary. You should see how skillfully they manœuvre. Like sword strokes their answers fall upon the enemy, forcing him to surrender. The hours you spend in learning the truths of our holy faith are really the most important in your life. With the weapons you receive there you are to fight for and win the highest price—Heaven, eternal happiness. Therefore you may well choose as your slogan the beautiful words of the hymn:

"Yes, Heaven is the price
My soul shall strive to gain!
One glimpse of paradise
Repays a life of pain!"

2

To become a hero of the faith and to win the crown of victory it will first of all be necessary that you train yourself for the fight. If you train in dead earnest, you will surely be victorious should it come to a serious battle. You will fight with the courage of a lion because the victors alone will receive the crown at the last judgment. Can you handle your weapons even now? Oh, indeed, there are plenty of enemies everywhere, individuals like the giant Goliath, and whole armies.

For instance, a non-Catholic friend looks mockingly at the holy pictures on the wall of your room and remarks: "You stupid Catholics adore pictures, whereas God says: Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing, and shalt not adore them" (Ex. XX, 4). Now watch our young Catholic hero! Small like David, but also brave as David, he takes up the fight with this clumsy Goliath. First he flings the stone of truth in his face and then knocks him out with the sword of the word of God. "Who told you we Catholics adore pictures? You seem to imagine that you know our holy faith better than we do ourselves. Only a few days ago I learned at school that we do not adore or pray to pictures and images of the saints, for they have no life or power to help us.

If you don't believe what I say, please take a look into our Catechism of Christian doctrine; there you can see black on white that you are a liar!"

Or a visitor says: "I read an interesting article the other day about the end of the world. It confirmed me in my conviction that the end of the world cannot be far off. Yes, I can prove from Holy Scripture that it is very near." Our young Catholic hero promptly replies: "Do you believe in the nonsense of that article? If you knew your Bible, you would know what our Saviour Himself says about the end of the world and the last judgment. Here are his words: 'Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not what day your Master cometh.' (Matt. XXIV, 42.) And again: 'About that day and hour none knoweth, not even the angels of heaven, nor yet the Son, but the Father alone' (Matt. XXIV, 36). You seem to be wiser than our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Perhaps you are one of those Adventists who, a few years ago, stood in white garments and with palm branches in their hands upon a hill, waiting for the end of the world. They waited a long time, but in vain, for the end of the world did not come." By this time the would-be prophet will have become silent.

My dear children! These are two examples to show you how you should defend your faith. If every one of you will act as these boys did, you will be staunch soldiers of the army of Christ. The bigger the army, the surer the victory. Hence, band together by joining our young people's sodalities, such as the junior Holy Name Society and the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, attend their meetings and, above all, attend church

services and receive Holy Communion at least once a month; if possible, more frequently. Hundreds are solemnly knighted as soldiers of Christ each year in the Sacrament of Confirmation. They will all go forth with us into a hostile world and, like the Apostles, courageously fight under the banner of Christ the King. Do not forget, dear boys and girls, that you are the hope of the Church. Always remain loyal and true to your Saviour; render him the double tribute of your service and obedience. Under His guidance you will gain the crown of victory. Hoist the flag emblazoned with the oath of your allegiance to the Saviour:

“Onward, Christian soldiers!
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before;
Christ, the royal Master,
Leads against the foe;
Forward into battle,
See, his banners go!” Amen.

THE POWER OF DEVOUT AND FERVENT PRAYER

(Fifth Sunday after Easter)

“Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it to you.” (John XVI, 23.)

MY dear children! Before our Divine Saviour left this world, He told his Apostles, and through them all of us, what we should do when trials and sufferings break in on us. He said that we should pray, and solemnly promised that He would hear us whenever we prayed

fervently and devoutly. "Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it to you." These words of Christ should stimulate us to pray confidently, especially during the days of the coming week, called rogation days. We must pray God to bless and protect us, and to supply all our needs, in particular, to bless the crops and to grant us an abundant harvest. We know that devout and fervent prayer is most powerful,

- I. *Because our Lord Himself has said it, and*
- II. *Because many favors have been and are still being granted by God in response to devout and fervent prayer.*

I

What does our Lord say about the power of prayer?

One day Jesus was kneeling in prayer in a lonely spot in Palestine. His disciples observed Him from afar. Deeply impressed by the profound devotion of their Master, they approached and asked Him: "Lord, teach us to pray, to pray as devoutly as you did a while ago!" There and then Jesus taught His disciples the most beautiful of all prayers: the "*Our Father*." At the same time he demonstrated to them by the following story how powerful prayer is.

Two friends with their families were living side by side in a lonely place. One day one of them had unexpected visitors in the middle of the night. They were tired and hungry, but the master of the house had nothing to set before them. In his distress he went over to the house of his friend, knocked at the door, and

called until his friend awoke. Then he asked in a begging tone of voice: "Will you not please help me out with three loaves of bread? Some friends of mine have just arrived, tired and hungry, and I have nothing to set before them!" His friend angrily retorted: "What is the matter with you? My whole family is asleep. If I get up and strike a light, they will all be awakened, and I will get no more sleep for the rest of the night. You had better go home and tell your friends to go to bed and wait until to-morrow!" But the other one kept on begging and knocking, until at last his friend arose and gave him the bread he needed, so as to be rid of him (Luke II, 1-9).

By this story the Saviour wished to teach that if perseverance and confidence are so successful in asking a favor from an ill-humored friend, much more so will ardent prayer succeed in obtaining a favorable hearing with our Heavenly Father, who never sleeps and who is not only our best friend, but also our Father. Then he continued, exhorting the disciples: "Ask, and you shall receive. Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it to you" (John XVI, 23).

2

The Saviour teaches us that fervent prayer is all-powerful with God and certain to be heard, provided, of course, that we pray with the right intention and for something truly good. Now I am going to show you by actual facts that this is really so.

King Herod, after he had beheaded the Apostle

James, ordered Peter to be seized and cast into prison, to be executed within a few days. As soon as the Christians had heard of Peter's imprisonment, they gathered in the supper room on Mount Sion and fervently prayed to God for the beloved Apostle. They prayed incessantly day and night: "O Lord, James is dead, and Peter is about to die; save our beloved brother from the hands of the cruel Herod!" One night, while Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, an angel came and waked him, saying: "Arise and come with me!" Instantly the chains around his hands and feet fell to the ground. Peter and his companion passed the first and second guards unnoticed. As they reached the large iron gate leading to the city, it opened by itself. Peter hurried on to the supper room and heard the Christians inside praying: "O Lord, save our beloved brother, Peter!" A maiden, hearing his repeated knocks at the door, asked: "Who is knocking?" "It is I, your brother Peter!" For joy she forgot to open the door and, running back into the room, cried: "Peter is standing before the door!" The disciples did not believe it at first and asked her if she had not, perhaps, heard the voice of a ghost. As the knocking continued, the door was opened, and behold, there stood Peter, safe and free. The prayers of his flock had saved him.

Another example: Last Friday we celebrated the feast of a saintly woman, St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine. She prayed for her wayward son day after day, week after week, for sixteen long years. Finally her prayers were heard. The prodigal son be-

came a priest and a bishop, and is now a glorious Saint in Heaven.

Even to-day favors are being granted quite frequently in response to fervent prayers. Many a good mother may thank God for having comforted her in distress and sorrow, for having aided her marvelously in some way or other as the result of confident prayer. Also in our days the proverb proves true: "God is nearer than the doorstep."

But sometimes things turn out differently from what we expect, and one or the other of you may think: "We don't always get what we pray for." Thus little Catherine prayed weeks before Christmas for a nice big doll, and still did not get it. Another one may tell me: "My Mama bought ten chances on an automobile, and we prayed and prayed that we might have the lucky number, but didn't win a thing. Why did God not hear our prayers?" A simple parable will clear up the difficulty. A father strolling through the woods with his little son comes to a ditch filled with water. The boy says: "Papa, carry me over the ditch, I am afraid I might fall into it!" The father willingly carries him over because he loves his little son. Farther on they come to a blueberry patch. The boy points to the delicious berries, saying: "Papa, I am hungry; may I have some of these berries?" The father plucks as many of the berries as his son wants, because he loves his little boy. After that they pass another patch laden with clusters of bright red berries. The boy makes a run for them, dragging his father after him: "O Papa," he cries out, "those red berries must be exceedingly

delicious! Can I have some?"—"No," replies the father, "you cannot. They are poisonous; let them alone." He refuses to give any of these berries to his son because he loves him. But the boy starts to whine and beg, and in his rage throws himself on the ground kicking his feet, because he simply cannot or does not want to believe that the berries are poisonous. Then the father takes a stick and gives his son a sound whipping. He whips his little boy because he loves him and does not want him to die from eating poisonous berries. We all at times pray to God for things which we believe to be good and useful, but which would be as poisonous for us as the deceitful red berries were for our little friend. For that reason God oftentimes refuses to give us the things we pray for; He refuses, because He loves us.

My dear children! Whenever you ask God the Father for something that is really conducive to your temporal and spiritual welfare, He will give it to you. The prayers of innocent children are especially powerful. Don't forget to pray also to the Blessed Virgin. She will intercede for you with her Divine Son and induce Him to grant you all the favors that are useful for your soul and body. Amen.

FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN

(Feast of the Ascension)

"... While they looked on, He was raised up: and a cloud received Him out of their sight." (Acts I, 9.)

My dear children! With intense surprise and longing the Apostles beheld the Saviour ascend to Heaven on

a golden cloud. They stood there perplexed and down-cast. No doubt they would gladly have gone with their Master. We, too, are inclined to be sad to-day because Jesus, our friend, our Saviour, has left us, to return to His Father in Heaven. But He consoles us with the words: "Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart; but I tell you the truth: it is expedient to you that I go" (John XVI, 6-7); "and if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself; that, where I am, you also may be" (John XIV, 3). This is true, my dear children! For, as St. Paul says, Jesus entered Heaven as a forerunner (Hebr. VI, 20), to prepare the way for us; and He wants us to follow him. To-day we set out on this heavenward journey. But the question is, *how and by what road* shall we get there? The road is the highway leading from earth to Heaven. Earth is the station from which we start, and Heaven is the terminus at which we hope to arrive. Between the two lies your life journey. Would to God it were a journey heavenwards for all of you! This it will be, if you mark well the advice I will now give you. There are three things to be considered before going on this journey:

- I. *Our equipment for the journey;*
- II. *The road we must take; and*
- III. *The goal at which we hope to arrive.*

I

Our equipment for the journey. It is not all the same whether we start out in a dress suit and a stove-

pipe-hat or in first Communion clothes with badges, or in a snappy sport costume. An experienced traveler will see to it that he is properly equipped before he sets out on a long journey. And we have far to go!

Let us begin at the bottom. What is the condition of your foot-gear? You need a pair of heavy, solid shoes with which to stride over stones and rocks. The leather must be strong; the shoes must be neither too long nor too short. The best trade-mark in shoes for the heavenward journey is *a good conscience*. When nails pierce the soles, or grains of sand creep into the shoes, your feet will start to blister and you will soon have to sit down by the wayside. There must be no sins sticking in the shoes on your journey to Heaven, for they will molest and plague you too much on the way. Your shoes must have double soles: the one is examination of conscience and the other is contrition. We might do well to equip the heels and soles with special rubber protectors to guard the footgear of our conscience against the seven capital sins, which otherwise would be apt to do untold harm. Finally, we fasten the two soles together with sixteen strong nails, which are the Ten Commandments of God and the six commandments of the Church. If they sit tight, the soles will be well nigh holeproof.

The next thing necessary is a well filled knapsack. Our good mother, the Catholic Church, takes care of that. She puts into it delicious and wholesome things, not dainties which ruin the stomach. Neither will it do on a journey like this to run after vain and empty pleasures, after show houses and candy stores. What

sort of provisions then will she stuff into our knapsack? Good nutritious sandwiches, so that you will be able to hold out. These are the doctrines and precepts of the Church, the admonitions and exhortations of priests, parents, and teachers. But you will get thirsty on your way and need cool, refreshing drinks. Do not expect that she will give you beer, wine or whisky, for they only befog your brain and lame your feet. She gives you, instead, the gifts of the Holy Ghost in seven small flasks, each with its own label: the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of the Lord. Moreover, she packs a little emergency kit into the sack. Should you take ill suddenly, or meet with an accident on the way—I mean, if you should fall into sin—you can take out your medicine kit and start to mend your soul. This emergency kit is confession.

And now a travelling costume made of material that will protect you against rain and hail, against cold and heat: this is our holy faith, protecting us from false teachings, heresies, and superstitions.

The last thing on the equipment list is a firm staff with a sharp steel point fastened to the bottom; that is good will, with which to kill all dangerous beasts and poisonous reptiles, that is, overcome temptations.

2

A last careful glance at your outfit. Is everything in order, my dear children? Good, then let us go!

We start out at a very early hour, just as the roosters begin to crow. For "the early morning hours

are like grains of gold." Now, in the days of youthful vigor, you must cover the greatest distance of the journey and make the most important and the steepest portion of the ascent. Hence you must quit pulling quilts and blankets over your head in the morning when it is time to rise. Only those who overcome sloth and laziness, who get up bright and early in the morning, and are diligent and industrious during the day, will reach the distant goal of Heaven.

The station we started from, home and school, will soon be out of sight. We have outgrown the school and are entering upon the wide and open highway of life. What direction shall we take now? "Stay below in the valley, drift along the broad, smooth highway," is the answer of the lazy pleasure-seeker. "Oh, no! We want to get out of this sombre valley and follow the lofty road which leads to Heaven!" is the enthusiastic cry of the majority. And they are right. Why should we swallow forever the dust of the crowded highways, why should we forever put up with the crookedness and malice of the people in the lowland! Why should we be forever dodging noisy autos that raise clouds of dust and leave a nasty smell behind—I mean bad companions who invite us to "Hop in! You will get ahead so much more quickly and travel so much more comfortably!" They leave behind the stench of their sins and crimes, and will some day bump into a tree and break their necks. We make for the forest above by the steepest and narrowest path.

Last but not least we have to choose a wise and skillful guide for our long and perilous journey. Your best

guides are your parents, teachers, and priests. Unbelieving and evil-minded men will want to rob you of your faith and innocence. Only an experienced guide will know how to protect you against these dangerous assailants. Pay strict obedience to your leaders, therefore. And also note the signs along the road, lest you go astray—I mean, the admonitions and exhortations of your parents, teachers, and priests.

Discreet travelers will not always keep on the run. They will stop now and then for a little rest and for refreshments. Hence, be on the look-out for a shady spot near the cool waters of a crystal spring, with a charming view of the surrounding landscape. Such a shady grove in our life's upward journey is the Sunday. In the morning we go to Mass and receive new vigor and strength in Holy Communion. In the afternoon we kindle a cheery camp fire, the bright flame of friendship and good fellowship, and move round about it in joyous sprightly play. Moderate recreation after the day's work and on Sunday afternoons refreshes the heart and is a tonic for body and soul. But do not play too much, lest you grow overheated and too tired to continue the journey. Hence do not overindulge in sport and bodily exercises, or else you will lack the necessary energy for work and study during the rest of the week. And why not occasionally sing a cheerful song on your journey? If you can play the mouth organ or the flute or the ukulele or the violin, so much the better! Song and music, play and innocent amusements have a rightful place in our life. They keep us fresh in mind and heart. Among them I also reckon the

beautiful church songs and hymns which are sung during the Children's Mass.

3

"Hurrah, we have arrived at the goal!" shouts a spunky lad far ahead. Yes, here we are at last, upon the lofty crest. Another pull, and we breathe a fervent: Thank God! In an ecstasy of joy and happiness we contemplate the magnificent vision spread out before us. The world below is wrapped in clinging mists, only a few dark-blue mountain ridges emerge from the silver lined clouds, and above and around us glistens the golden sunshine. We feel tired after the long and strenuous journey. But now we have plenty of time to take a long, well earned rest. We never need go down again. Graciously smiling the Saviour steps forward and, holding out His hands, greets us with the words: "My dearest friends, you are welcome to your eternal home." Amen.

WAR AND PEACE

(Sixth Sunday after Easter)

MY dear children! This is a day of great joy for you. You will be enrolled to-day in the glorious army of the soldiers of Jesus Christ. Do you realize what that means? In medieval times it often happened that a soldier who had excelled on the battle-field was knighted by his monarch. This entitled him to put

"Sir" or "Lord" before his name, to bear a coat of arms, and to live in a castle. To-day you will be made Christian knights by your heavenly general, the Holy Ghost. To Him you are to swear faithful allegiance as your supreme leader throughout life. The Holy Ghost will be your

I. *Leader in battle and*

II. *Conduct you to victory.*

I

The Holy Ghost will be your leader in battle. The first thing a soldier needs is a well-fitting uniform. The Holy Ghost gives you this uniform in the Sacrament of Confirmation, in which He clothes your soul in a radiant uniform and pins on it the sign of His regiment, a silver dove encircled with fiery tongues. This is a spiritual character impressed as an indelible mark on your soul. You can never change this uniform, but will remain soldiers of Christ forever. Be proud of your uniform and never disgrace it by deserting your flag, that is, by denying your holy faith!

A soldier must have weapons to fight with. In the Sacrament of Confirmation the Holy Ghost furnishes you with seven powerful weapons: The strong *spear* of truth to pierce every lie and heresy; the trusty *sword* of knowledge, to be sharpened by learning and used against stupidity, folly, and childishness; the *steel helmet* of understanding, protecting you against bad example and the seductive words of wicked com-

rades; the solid *armor* of the fear of the Lord, made of the Ten Commandments, from which the arrows of the devil will rebound powerlessly; the golden *shield* of piety, shielding you against hypocrisy, impiety, and lukewarmness; the strong and fast *steed* of fortitude, able to outrun the temptations and allurements of the devil; finally, the *book of counsel*, teaching you how to seek covering in danger and to attack the trenches and evade the pitfalls of the hostile army.

Equipped with these weapons you may go forth confidently against the enemy. There is hot fighting ahead of you, even in the days of your youth. Every day you have to face an army of treacherous enemies. They lie in ambush for you at every street corner, in hidden nooks and dark alleys. They grin at you from dirty placards, from alluring books, from fascinating movie pictures, yes, they may be waiting for you even on your mother's pantry shelves. They all sing the one refrain: "Come on, enjoy yourself and have a good time!" Attention, soldiers of the Holy Ghost! Be fearless and loyal to your Master!

Even more treacherous enemies are sneaking around you, hidden like savage Indians in the prairie grass: vanity, self-conceit, selfishness, pride. You may not see these faults in you and may even think yourselves absolutely faultless. Worse than that—whenever any one dares to find fault with you, you behave like an offended majesty. Attention, soldier of the Holy Ghost! Know thyself! "Come, Holy Ghost, Thou spirit of truth! Lead me on!" And He will lead you to victory.

2

War is followed by peace. Do you understand the meaning of this most beautiful of all words? Oh, how the nations during the terrible World War longed for peace! It is a heavenly gift! Your leader in the fight, the Holy Ghost, will bring you peace.

After having beaten the enemies of your soul with the sword of faith and the battle-ax of virtue, a blessed breath will swell your breast, the breath of the Holy Ghost, the peace of a *good conscience*, and this makes a child truly happy.

After having defeated the army of the seven cardinal sins with their legion of diabolic helpers, you will live in peace with your neighbors, with your brothers and sisters, your comrades, teachers and parents, in the peace of *mutual charity*, and this peace, too, makes a child truly happy.

But it is also the fervent wish of the Holy Ghost that there be a lasting peace among the nations of the earth. And you children, small as you are, must help to bring it about. As soldiers of the Holy Ghost you must fight for it. Form a "league of peace-makers." Invoke the mighty help of the Holy Ghost in words like these: "O Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of all men throughout the world with peace and brotherly love. Put an end forever to bloody wars with their hatred, hunger, and misery. We will do our share by prayer, by acts of self-denial, and by conquering our passions

to help secure peace among the nations. Mankind can be happy only when peace reigns supreme."

My dear children! Always be thankful to the Holy Ghost. You ask me how you can be grateful to Him in your daily life! Think of the minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation, your own beloved bishop. He will make you partakers of a great happiness to-day. He is, so to speak, the adjutant, the ambassador of the Holy Ghost. In this solemn hour swear to him undying loyalty. He has so many cares and worries for the spiritual and temporal welfare of his flock. Help him carry his heavy burden by praying for him now, and, later on, when you are grown up, assist him in any and every emergency.

About sixty years ago some powerful men persecuted the archbishop of a big diocese. They intended to put him into prison and auction all his possessions. But his brave Catholic people fought for him. They succeeded in keeping him out of prison and in saving all his property. Do you want to become such loyal, faithful Catholic men and women? Then promise here and now: "We shall be true to our holy faith, loyal to our beloved bishop!" Then, indeed, the benediction which the bishop gives you during Confirmation will take effect in your life, and peace will be with you. Amen.

III. PENTECOST

GOD THE HOLY GHOST

(Feast of Pentecost)

MY dear children! On one of his mission journeys St. Paul came into a big city. Another missionary must have been there before him, for the people told him that they had been baptised. St. Paul then asked them if they had also received the Holy Ghost, or, as we should say, if they had been confirmed. They looked at one another in great surprise and answered: "No, we do not know about the Holy Ghost, we have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Ghost!" (Acts XIX, 20.) Now you will surely say those people were stupid! Every Catholic child knows of the Holy Ghost. We are reminded of him whenever we make the sign of the cross. Yes, but tell me, what do you *know* about the Holy Ghost? I see you make long faces. Once a child complained to a priest: "Father, I cannot love the Holy Ghost as much as God the Father and God the Son, because I do not know anything about Him!"

My dear children! I am afraid you are in a similar quandary as this little girl and those Christians whom St. Paul asked about the Holy Ghost. Hence I will speak to you about the Holy Ghost to-day, on the great Feast of Pentecost.

- I. *Who is the Holy Ghost?*
- II. *What does the Holy Ghost do in the world and in your soul?*

I

Who is the Holy Ghost?

My dear children! You have learned in your catechism that "the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Blessed Trinity, equal to the Father and to the Son, being the same Lord and God as they are." And the "Credo" which the choir sings during High Mass on Sundays says that the Holy Ghost proceeds, that is, goes forth, from the Father and the Son.

Can you understand that? I will try to make it a little clearer to you by an example. A little child is happy when the mother takes it up in her arms. It clings to her, seeking protection, as the little baby chicks seek shelter under the wings of the hen. It does not want to leave its mother and starts to cry as soon as the mother puts it aside for a moment to do some work in the house. Why is the baby so fond of its mother? Why does it like to play and laugh and caress with her rather than with anyone else? And why is the mother so happy and contented when the child climbs up to her and puts its little arms around her neck? Both mother and child are so happy when close to each other because they are inseparably connected by an intimate feeling which we call love.

Now the love between *mother* and *child* is but a faint likeness of the infinite love that exists between

God the Father and God the Son. The love between them is something infinitely sublime and divine, yea, it is a divine person, namely, God the Holy Ghost! We can never fully understand how this is, and yet we must believe that it is so because God has revealed it. The Holy Ghost is the infinite Love between God the Father and God the Son. He is that Holy Flame which, proceeding from God, came down in fiery tongues upon the Apostles on the first Pentecost. He is that Heavenly Fire which inspires all that is noble, virtuous, and beautiful in us, even as the sun awakens, sprouts, and ripens the flowers in the fields in summer time.

2

What does the Holy Ghost do in the world and in your soul?

My dear children! While I was preparing this sermon, and thinking how I could explain to you in the simplest and easiest way just who the Holy Ghost is, there came into my mind the story of the great St. Augustine and the little boy at the seashore. That little boy seemed to look at me with a mocking smile, as if he wanted to say: "You wish to solve the inscrutable mystery of the Holy Ghost and explain it to little children. Much sooner shall I pour the whole sea into this small hole with my little shell; tell them rather what the Holy Ghost does; they will understand that much more readily." What, then, does the Holy Ghost do in the world and in your soul?

In our daily May devotions last week we prepared for the great Feast of Pentecost by the following prayer: "Send forth, O God, Thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth." These words describe the mission of the Holy Ghost: He makes all things new and beautiful.

My dear children! When the Island of Madeira was discovered, it was impossible for any man to live there. The whole island was covered with an impenetrable jungle. Ugly reptiles and venomous serpents kept house in this terrible wilderness. The explorers searched in vain for a means to make the spot inhabitable. Finally one of them said to his companions: "Let us set fire to the jungle and burn down everything!" They all agreed. In a short time the fire had destroyed the jungle and with it all the monsters that dwelt therein. Then the discoverers began to cultivate the land, they planted new trees, flowers, and herbs and transformed the island into a paradise. To-day it is one of the healthiest and most beautiful places in the world.

What the fire did with Madeira Island, that the Holy Ghost did with the great, wide world. You have learned that "in the beginning God created Heaven and earth; but the earth was dark and empty." Who brought light and order into the dark and empty world and adorned it with beauty? The Holy Ghost. He hovered over the earth and transformed it into a wonderful garden. It was He, therefore, who made everything that is beautiful in this world.

And what did He make of your soul? When you

came into this world, your soul was like Madeira Island, choked, so to speak, with thorns and underbrush, and the serpent of original sin together with the ugly monsters of evil inclinations were keeping house therein. In Baptism the Holy Ghost entered your soul like a heavenly fire. His sanctifying grace cleansed and illuminated you. You were created anew, as pure and holy as the angels. Your soul was transformed into a beautiful garden in the midst of which the Holy Ghost erected His temple, surrounded on all sides with the flowers of virtue. And your heart was to be his dwelling-place forever. If you dishonor His holy temple by mortal sin, you force Him to leave it and to surrender it to the devil, who will change the beautiful garden of your soul back into a frightful wilderness.

My dear children! Nowadays many venomous serpents seek to creep into your hearts—the serpents of unbelief and heresy—and the weeds of sin again and again try to invade the garden of your soul. Therefore keep alive in it the fire of the Holy Ghost, to burn down the weeds and the reptiles.

An ancient legend says there was once a great king who on a certain day of the year sent out messengers, who carried fire from the royal hearth into every home. This fire was called “King’s Fire.” On the day it was distributed all the home fires were extinguished and rekindled.

My dear children! Pentecost is the festival of a great king, the Holy Ghost, who still sends His heavenly fire into the hearts of men, just as He sent it into the hearts of the Apostles on the first Pentecost

day. Oh, let this heavenly fire enter your soul and keep it burning there forever! Implore the Holy Ghost to dwell in you and protect you with His powerful graces against all the enemies of your soul. Amen.

HOW YOU CAN BECOME A LITTLE APOSTLE

(*Trinity Sunday*)

“Going therefore, teach you all nations; baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!” (Matt. XXVIII, 19.)

MY dear children! When a mother takes leave of her children forever, she gives them loving advice as to what they should do when they are left alone. The last words of his mother are a sacred legacy to every child. Before Jesus left His Apostles, He spoke loving words of consolation and made known to them his last will. We have just heard these last words of our Saviour in to-day’s Gospel: “Go . . . and teach!” And to encourage the Apostles to undertake their difficult mission, He added: “Have courage; I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.”

“Go and teach!” Were these words meant only for the Apostles? Oh, no, they were meant for all Christians; they are a sacred legacy of our Divine Saviour to all of us. We must all assist in spreading the Gospel of Jesus, all Christians, *you children too*, must be Apostles. I will explain to you to-day how you can become Apostles of our Lord. You may be sure that the Apostles, before they went out into the world, first looked

for a suitable mission field, and then made their plans as to how they would approach the people there. If you children want to become little Apostles, you must know:

- I. *Where your mission field is, and*
- II. *How you can help to spread the Gospel there.*

I

Do you remember my sermon on the Feast of Epiphany, in which I showed you how you can become little missionaries? I told you that you did not need to go to heathen countries, but in a certain sense are already missionaries when praying for the heathens and helping their children with your little offerings. To-day I am going to tell you about a mission field that is not far away, where you can work as real little missionaries and true apostles of Jesus. Can you guess what I mean? There are heathens not only in Asia, Africa, and Australia, but also in our very midst. Are there not children in this very parish who never come to Mass on Sundays, but almost regularly go out with their parents on Sunday morning for an automobile ride or on a hunting and fishing trip? Have you never heard people say they did not need to attend church because they could worship God and pray to Him quite as well in the open air as in church? My dear children! are not these modern heathens quite as bad as, nay worse than, the real heathens who adore inanimate objects instead of the Divine Creator?

And again, are there not among us children who

stay in bed all Sunday morning, but "go to the show" in the afternoon and are impudent enough to invite you to go along, because a show is more interesting than divine services in church! Perhaps your own brother or sister spends the Sunday forenoon on the play-grounds instead of going to Mass. Or perhaps your father and mother have for years neglected to receive the Sacraments. Sad to say, you find even young people who are not ashamed to declare: "Church services, religious instructions, confession—nonsense, these things are obsolete!" In big cities like ours hundreds each year turn their backs upon the Catholic faith. Almost all of them live without God and religion; they live like animals; they eat, drink, sleep, work, and enjoy life!

Do you know now where your mission field is, dear children? It is right here in your own parish, in your own family, at school, on the street in which you live; in short, wherever you happen to be, there you can work as little apostles of our Divine Saviour.

2

My dear children! Let me explain how you can work as little apostles in this mission field.

To win the modern heathen back to the Saviour it will be necessary for you, first and above all, to set a good example. Yes, but how? Remember what was said in the sermon on the Feast of Epiphany. What did the lepers say when they were nursed so tenderly by Catholic priests and sisters? "What prompts you to serve

us, when neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister renders us such a service of love?" Do you remember what the missionaries responded? "We do this because our faith teaches us to do so, and God wishes it!" Do you see what I want to prove by this? You cannot convert the heathens of to-day unless you first of all show them by your example how our faith makes men good. Here, then, is your appointed task: Make people see by your good behavior at home, in school, in your neighborhood, that you are true Catholic children, always bright and friendly, docile, obliging, honest and polite! Everyone with whom you come in contact, even those of other denominations, will marvel and say: "The Catholic children are the finest and best trained of all!" Let your teachers know that they can always depend on you, that you are most diligent and attentive pupils, who never utter an ugly or a sinful word. Our Divine Saviour said: "A tree is known by its fruits." You are, so to speak, the fruits on the tree of the Catholic faith. If you are good, people will say that the tree, namely, the Catholic faith, is good. Therefore, you see I am right, when I say that you are little Apostles when you strive day by day to live according to your holy faith and try to become better and more virtuous all the time.

A good child will try to make others good. Good children will not tolerate a bad child among them, but will do all they can to bring that misguided child back to the path of virtue. Do you know why so many men cast off their faith as a useless thing? Simply because they do not know its value or have not learned to

understand it. It is, therefore, a strict obligation for you to acquaint yourselves with the doctrines and truths of our holy faith, to love and practise them. The Children's Mass on Sundays is of great importance in this regard. As a true apostle you should line up your friends and companions on Sunday morning and see that they go to Mass. Do not rest satisfied until all the sleepy-heads and lazy-bones are on time for Holy Mass.

Be also a little apostle to your *younger brothers and sisters* at home. A girl in the seventh or eighth grade, for instance, should get up early on Sunday morning to help the younger members of the family to get ready for Mass. Yes, a really good child can be an apostle even to its parents. Perhaps your father has grown careless in his religious duties and, embittered by some misfortune, turned his back on God. Or a care-worn mother has neglected her Easter duty for several years. What is there to be done? Of course, you cannot lecture your parents and say to them: "If you continue that way, you will go straight to hell!" But there is one thing you can do, and that is to repeat and explain at home the lessons you have learned in church or school. This is apt to rouse the curiosity of your parents, and they may be tempted to come to church some time and listen to a sermon. And once parents have become accustomed to pray and sing with their children in church, they are not likely to neglect Mass afterwards. Of course, you will succeed in this only if you are good and devout children.

A priest who is now a Cardinal tells the following

touching story: The father of a little girl by the name of Elizabeth had become one of the worst haters of church and religion. Elizabeth was a pious girl, always respectful and obedient towards her father and eager to gratify his every wish. She was the sunshine of the house. No wonder that the father, in spite of his aversion for religion, was very fond of his child and never spoke a harsh word to her. One day he met with a frightful accident. He was caught by a loom in the factory where he was working and fearfully mangled. They took him to a hospital where he lay for weeks in a hopeless condition. During the long, painful nights the picture of his devoted daughter impressed itself vividly on his mind, and an intense longing for the happy, innocent days of his own childhood arose and grew stronger. Elizabeth visited her father regularly, trying to assuage his sufferings by her consoling words. One day she could clearly see that his end was near. Her first thought was that he might die without the Sacraments. So she took a heart and asked him imploringly: "Father, do you not want to receive our dear Saviour? Every morning since you are in the hospital I have received Holy Communion for you that you might be restored to perfect health." The poor man slowly turned his face to the other side, to conceal the tears in his eyes. The next morning he devoutly received the last Sacraments and died soon afterwards.

Dear children! Little Elizabeth was an apostle and a saving angel for her father. We must have the same love for all men that Elizabeth had for her father. And this love must extend to the poor heathens in

foreign countries as well as to the heathens here at home. We should cherish within our hearts at least a spark of that love which moved Jesus to give His life for the redemption of the world. It is His will that this love should burn in our souls as a holy fire: "I am come to cast fire on the earth: and what will I, but that it be kindled?" (Luke XII, 49.) Jesus means the fire of zeal for the propagation of our holy faith. If this fire burns in your soul, you will become and remain zealous apostles, winning for the Saviour many converts here in our parish, perhaps even in your own family. Make this resolution to-day: "I will not be satisfied until, through my efforts, my neighbor, my companion, my brother, etc., goes to Mass again regularly on Sundays; I will endeavor to do all I can by prayer and charity to win back my father or my mother to God and religion." Whenever you meet with difficulties, or do not know what to do in a special case, ask your confessor for advice. He will show you how to go about it. Now then, my dear little apostles, go ahead cheerfully and with courage! Our Divine Saviour converted the whole world with twelve Apostles. With the help of many little apostles let us try to convert our parish. God will bless our difficult but noble undertaking. Amen!

ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATES OF THE PARISH SCHOOL

"May you have a good journey, and God be with you in your way, and his angel accompany you!" (Tob. V, 21.)

DEAR children and parents! A most important day in the life of a child is the day of his or her graduation

from the parish school. Fifteen graduates of our parochial school to-day launch forth into a life full of allurements and dangers. Parents, teachers and pastor look with a certain wistful sadness on these youngsters as they unsuspectingly entrust their frail barks to the treacherous waves of the sea of life. Again and again we ask ourselves: "What an one, think ye, shall this child be?" (Luke I, 66.)

You all know the story of Tobias. The aged father bids his departing son farewell in words which I would like to give you as a kind wish and a compass on your way: "May you have a good journey! God be with you in your way, and his angel accompany you!" A father's eye, a mother's heart and a friend's good wishes accompany you on your journey through life.

After graduating from school most of you will be removed from the restraining and guiding influence of father and mother. A new world with new superiors and comrades, new conditions and tasks, spreads out before you. Liberty, pleasures and amusements will allure and fascinate you; the bad example of shiftless comrades, their bold and shameless talk, their prodigality and dishonesty will exercise an evil influence on your heart and mind; your senses will want to be satiated with pleasures; your eagerness for work and study will slowly cool off; your parents will seem to you meddlesome mentors. The voice of your conscience, still warning you with loud reproaches at intervals, will gradually grow silent.

These are decisive hours. The all-seeing and benign eye of your Father in Heaven will watch you during

this dangerous period of life. Oh, raise your eyes heavenward! "All the days of your life have God before your eyes!" Never forget to greet Him devoutly in the morning and at night; never forget, as a saintly bishop used to say, to "turn a friendly face to your Father in Heaven," that is, to make a good intention: "All for the greater honor and glory of God!" Sanctify your work and the time you spend in preparing yourselves for a trade or profession. You are not serving human superiors, you are serving God, your Father in Heaven. Hence, let it be your greatest concern to please Him always. Two strangers were watching a workman who was carefully polishing a stone plate high up on a skyscraper. "Hey," they shouted up to him, "why do you take such pains with that stone plate up there, no one will ever look at it from down below!" The workman, pointing his hand heavenwards, answered: "There is One up there who sees it." Thus you should live, work, and think. The "One up there" in Heaven is always looking at you.

"All the days of your life have God before your eyes," especially in temptation. Think of young Joseph in Putiphar's house. He kept God before his eyes and with His aid repulsed the shameless woman: "How then can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?" (Gen. XXXI, 9.) He remained firm, pure, and upright and the thought of his fidelity to God filled his heart with consolation even after he had been thrown into prison. That is why God was with him and exalted him.

Say with the Psalmist: "To thee have I lifted up my

eyes, who dwellest in heaven. Behold as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress: so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until he have mercy on us" (Psalm CXXII, 1-2).

A mother's heart beats for you on your journey. "Honor thy mother all the days of her life: for thou must be mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee" (Tob. IV, 3 sq.). You think of your earthly mother now, and rightly so; her maternal heart beats for you, prays for you, cares for you and worries over you, just as of old young Tobias' mother constantly thought of and worried over her son when he was far away from home, prayed for him unceasingly and daily climbed to the mountain crest to look for his safe return. Ah, yes, "honor thy mother all the days of her life!" A young man, twenty-three years old, once made the following statement: "From my seventeenth year I have lived in big cities, far away from home. The memory of my mother, who prayed for me every night and often sent me loving, exhortatory letters, gave me such strength that, in spite of the numerous dangers surrounding me on every side, I have never done a mean or wicked thing. Never again could I look my mother straight in the eye, had I willfully looked into the eyes of a bad woman." Will you be able to speak like that later on? I sincerely hope so.

Then there is another mother whose heart beats for you: the holy Catholic Church. She is your spiritual mother, who made you children of God in Baptism; nourished you ever since your First Holy Communion

with the Bread of Angels; fed you with the word of God in religious instructions; for "not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." On Sundays and holydays she gathered you here in church, as a hen gathers the chicks under her wings; and even now she watches carefully over your spiritual welfare. She will be delighted to see you frequently at the Communion rail. She will give you a mother's choicest blessing when you enter into holy Matrimony and when you close your eyes in death. She will console and strengthen you with her last Sacraments and guide you with her prayers to your eternal home. "Honor thy mother all the days of her life!" Do not suffer any insulting remarks to be made in your presence against the Church, keep away from associations, meetings and societies which do not respect and love, but, on the contrary, attack, despise, and ridicule her.

And yet another mother cares for you—Mary, the Blessed Virgin, Christ's mother and yours. Have you ever seen the beautiful picture in which the Mother of God is represented as lovingly spreading her mantle around her faithful children? She understands your difficulties, trials, dangers, and temptations. Hence, my dear children, cling to her, pray to her each morning and night: "To Thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to Thee we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears."

And finally, there is a faithful friend who will guide and direct you on life's journey. Who would belittle the importance of a faithful friend in youth! Holy Scrip-

ture says: "Blessed is he that findeth a true friend" (Eccl. XXV, 12). Is he your friend who induces you to disobey God, who incites you to rebel against parents, teachers, and other lawful authorities, who keeps you away from Sunday Mass, religious instructions and the Sacraments, who seduces you to sinful pleasures? Oh, keep away from such false friends! They are helpers of the devil. A true friend draws you heavenward, he is a *sursum corda* for you. Your very best friend is and always will be your guardian angel. Think of the faithful services the guardian angel rendered to Tobias!

Take this friend along with you: "His holy angel accompany you!"

My dear children! God bless you on your journey! May the heavenly Father's watchful eye rest on you at all times, may your earthly and your spiritual mother remain dear and holy to you, and may your heavenly friend guide and protect you, so that you may reach your everlasting goal in the house of our Father in Heaven, where all of us, children and parents, teachers and priests, will bless the God of Heaven and give glory to him in the sight of all that live, because he has shown his mercy to us (Tob. XII, 6). Amen.

HOW CHILDREN SHOULD SPEND THEIR VACATIONS

MY dear children! At the word "vacation" your faces beam with joy. I know exactly how you feel. Although you like your teachers, you will be only too glad to be left alone for a while and not to be subject to the

strict rules of the class-room. It was the same in the days of my own happy youth. I vividly remember the enthusiasm which filled my heart when vacation started. I can understand the good cheer that prevails among you to-day. But that need not prevent me from saying some well-meant words to you about vacation. As your priest and as a friend who himself had good and evil experiences during his own vacations, I want to tell you:

- I. *For what purpose vacations are given, and*
- II. *For what purpose vacations are not given.*

I

Vacation is first of all a time of recreation for body and soul. Standing before you in the class-room during the past few weeks, I often thought that it was high time for the vacation to start. If a doctor were to examine you, he would no doubt find many of you to be suffering from nervousness. School holidays are given chiefly to enable you to relax your nerves.

Ponce de Leon sought the fountain of eternal youth in Florida. It was supposed to exist somewhere in a fairy land. By bathing in its marvelous waters a sick man, it was thought, would recover and emerge from it with youthful freshness and strength. Do you know where this fountain is? It is everywhere in the magnificent garden of nature, in the forests and on the meadows. Its waters run so clear and pure and are so near to all of us, that one wonders why so many shun their wholesome influence.

My dear children, satisfy the longing of your heart for true and pure joy! Frequently go out into the open air, wander through the woods, climb up the mountains! As a college student I used to roam through my home country. What a jolly good time I had with my friends, climbing up and down the hills, strolling about in the woods, steering a boat on a charming lake, racing with toppling water falls and, best of all, fishing in some clear brook! Those beautiful days are the happiest memories of a care-free youth. In those outings we had plenty of healthful exercise for body and soul and, besides, stored up treasures of wisdom and knowledge for life. You children here are to be envied for the many opportunities you have of making pleasant trips in and outside the city. A car will bring you in no time to wonderful parks with spacious, shadowy lawns; to the river with its ever-changing scene; to the lakes with their fresh breezes; to the green forests and waving fields on the outskirts of the city. Escape the crowded streets and go out to these places at least once a week, to refresh your body and soul!

I know of another fountain of joy during vacation time. Walking and playing and roaming about are excellent means of tuning up the nerves. A well-trained boy or girl, however, will find joy and recreation also in the family circle at home. Here the pretty little bob-headed girl has a chance to dive into the mysteries of the kitchen, to help mother in the laundry or to assist her in the housework. Could the little Miss experience greater satisfaction than in being able to tell her homecoming father: "Daddy dear, to-day I cooked the din-

ner all by myself!" There are, perhaps, hard-working servants in your parents' house. Oh, how thankful they will be when, through your kindness, they can have a day off to spend with their folks at home! Thus you perform a work of charity and show that you appreciate what they are doing for you day after day, earning, perhaps, only a small wage.

2

But what has all this to do with religion? It is rather unusual to preach about health, exercise, and the like. I do so to-day because many of you are ignorant of the dangers that surround you in vacation time and consequently boil in a pot of trouble after vacation is over. To such children I would like to say what our Divine Saviour once said to the unfortunate city of Jerusalem: "Oh, if thou also hadst known the things that are to thy peace!" I wish to warn you against the worst foe of your souls, namely, idleness. And here let me explain to you *for what purpose vacations are not given*. Vacation is not a time for loafing and day-dreaming. Therefore walk, play, swim, fish and help at home! Man has not been created by God to lead an idle life, soul and body must be kept busy! When you neglect to do good and useful things, you are likely to do bad things. Take the soil, for example. Unless you plant good seed, it will produce only weeds. Hence avoid idleness during vacation. Sloth is the beginning of all vices and has justly been called the devil's workshop. Always have something useful on hand to keep your-

self occupied. Don't sit around waiting for something to turn up, else you will fall into the whirlpool of vice.

Nor does vacation time dispense you from the duties of religion. Vacation or no vacation, always be faithful in the service of God. Children sometimes think that when there is no school, there is no obligation to attend church services. To those who enter upon vacation with such thoughts let me say loudly, so that they all can hear it: Even during vacation time you must attend Holy Mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation, and you commit a mortal sin if you neglect this duty through sloth or for some other worthless reason! Do you hear that? It is a mortal sin to miss Mass willfully on Sundays and holydays of obligation. A good child will forego a pleasure trip rather than neglect its duty to God.

Not long ago the daughter of a pious Protestant family became a Catholic. Why? The students of the college which she attended had arranged an excursion for Sunday. All but one were Protestants and did not worry about going to church. The Catholic girl asked: "What train will you take?"—"Why, the earliest morning train, of course!"—"I am sorry I cannot go with you then," was the prompt answer, "for I should not be able to attend Mass."—"Oh, my," the other girls giggled, "we are not going to church either, we shall sing a pious hymn in the open temple of God's nature and thus comply with our Sunday duty." But the Catholic girl said: "You do not know the value of a Mass, or you would not speak like that." She did not join in the excursion. The others criticized her and

laughed over her foolishness, as they called it. One of them, however, a Protestant young lady, had been greatly impressed by the girl's courage. The words: "You do not know the value of a Mass, or you would not speak like this" kept ringing in her ears. Out of curiosity she went to a Catholic church on one of the following Sundays. Of course, she did not understand what took place at the altar, but thought everything was beautiful and full of meaning. During the Elevation she knelt down, as the others did, deeply moved by the profound silence. She went to Mass repeatedly afterwards, something kept drawing her towards the Catholic church. After carefully studying the Mass she asked a priest for further explanations—and the result? That Protestant girl became a fervent Catholic. And what was the occasion of her conversion? The courageous behaviour of that conscientious Catholic friend, who had denied herself a pleasure trip in order to be able to go to Mass. Nothing will excuse you from attending Mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation except distance from church, sickness or urgent work. A similar rule applies to *morning* and *night prayers*.

My dear children! Bear all this well in mind! You must have rest during vacation. Let your books alone for a while. Have a good time, but do not be idle. Busy yourselves with something worth while, else vacation time will be for you a beginning of vice. Though you are not on duty in school, you must always be on duty in your religion. There is no vacation when it comes to the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. Also during vacation time the eye of

God scrutinizes your heart, and you must give an account of each one of these free days at the Last Judgment.

Now you know what to do and what not to do during vacation, and how to draw God's blessing upon yourselves during this time. Do as you were told to-day, and you will have a pleasant, gratifying, and useful vacation. That you may thoroughly enjoy yourselves is my sincere wish for you all. God bless you and keep you! Amen.

THE SUNDAYS IN HONOR OF ST. ALOYSIUS

I. A GREAT JOUSTING RALLY

(Second Sunday after Pentecost)

MY dear children! Let us imagine that we are medieval knights and ladies six hundred years ago in a strong castle high up on a mountain. Countless ramparts and steeples proudly look down into the foggy valleys and away over far distant peaks. A maid is dipping water from a deep cistern, and armored knights are on duty patrolling the ramparts. Suddenly the shrill blast of a horn sounds from the watch-tower in the morning breeze. The heavy draw-bridge rattles down, and over it with thundering hoofs gallops a messenger dressed in the crested uniform of the mighty Lord of Gonzaga. "On to Castiglione," he cries out, "the prince is calling you, young knights and ladies, to take part in a great tourney and court festival!" In a moment the court-

yard is astir. Steel harness glitters in the morning sun, thorough-bred horses with embroidered silk streamers neigh and stamp impatiently, green-and-red helmet bushes flutter in the breeze, and dainty dames ride on milk-white steeds. . . . The prince who calls on us is St. Aloysius, the patron of youth. He invites us to his castle at Castiglione to take part in a great jousting rally and a six weeks' court service. I mean the six Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius. He wants to teach us the details of a great art, in which he himself was an expert, the art of saving our soul. Let us all heed his call and spend the six coming Sundays as :

- I. *A knight's journey 'lasting six days,*
- II. *A sixfold spiritual warfare,*
- III. *A six weeks' court service.*

Castiglione is a wonderful old castle near Mantua in Italy, the home of St. Aloysius. Let us start out on our journey to meet him there.

I

There are six Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius, and accordingly our journey is going to last six Sundays. That means six days' marching through swamps and thickets, over rocks and mountains! Are you afraid, my dear children?

Strap on the breastplate of courage! You will need it on this tour. Going to confession and Holy Communion on six successive Sundays is quite a feat. Shall I be able to hold out, you ask yourself? Don't be afraid or discouraged, but go forward and win! A good start is half the victory! Think of the goal: the castle of Castiglione

and the court life! What you shall see and learn there is really worth the hardships, dangers, and difficulties you will have to undergo.

Difficulties will not be wanting on the way. I hear, for instance, ironical remarks from a shiftless comrade loafing by the wayside: "O Tony, O Evelyn, you are cracked. Going to confession and Communion six Sundays in succession! Starting out to become a Saint—eh!" Watch your step, my child! Perhaps you are discouraged and think: "This is too much, I cannot stand it; I guess I had better quit." What! Are you not on a knightly journey? Why don't you face the mocking loafer and say to him: "You had better get out of here and mind your own business!" Or out in the woods you meet an old, wrinkled witch, prophesying: "This sort of thing is useless, children, believe me, you will become frivolous and callous by going to confession and Communion too often!" Watch your step, my child! Perhaps you agree with a doubtful mien: "There *might* be danger ahead! . . ." O you simpleton! Do you really believe in the sayings of this old wench? No harm will ever come to you as long as you are faithful to your spiritual guides. Now then, my dear children, saddle the steed of good will, keep a firm hold on the stirrups, and let us start off for the goal!

2

Here we are at Castiglione. What a wonderful castle! It seems to know that the heart of a Saint once beat within its walls, so proudly it stands before us. In bowers and balconies high above twinkles the charm-

ing splendor of princes, knights and ladies, and down below in the court-yard preparations are making for a great tournament. The principal purpose of the six Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius is to war against your predominant passions. You will have to observe three regulations:

1. *Keep a sharp look-out!* Through the slits of your vizor you must recognize at once the enemy's harness and the color of his helmet. Recognize at once, my child, your principal fault and rush upon it.

2. *Be cool and alert in striking blows!* Hark, the trumpet sounds! Forward now! Breast your spear! Deliver a mighty blow! Throw your opponent, that is your principal fault, wobbling off his steed! As soon as he tries to make another attack, instantly deliver a second blow. Don't wait a minute! The more quickly, the more resolutely you gain self-control, the sooner your adversary will be defeated.

3. *Keep your seat in the saddle!* The first encounter with the adversary may drive you back. You begin to lose ground. Keep your seat and take a new aim. You will not overcome a fault at the first attack. You must have a strong will and great endurance, and you must do your utmost to keep your seat in the saddle. If you are brave and ready to strike, your adversary will give way and be beaten in the end. After fighting six battles you ought by all means to be the winner.

3

The service at the court of St. Aloysius is to last six weeks. My child, how much can you not see and

learn there! The next five sermons will show you many interesting details of the immediate surroundings. Rest assured your court service will not be tiresome.

1. During this time St. Aloysius himself will be your *leader* and *trainer*. By his exalted example he will show you how to win, not only in this tournament, but also in the fierce battle of life.

2. The *weapons* we fight with are the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance and Holy Communion.

3. The *goal* we are aiming at in this court service is: to be dubbed true knights and virtuous noble dames under the banner of St. Aloysius. God-fearing boys and clean-hearted girls—this is what we need in our day.

Now, my dear boys and girls, make this journey a success! You have a fine chance of showing the stuff you are made of. We shall note those backsliders who through laziness, cowardice or weakness back out in the middle of this court service in honor of St. Aloysius.

About fifty years ago Professor Powell, a courageous man, explored the terrifying Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. Immense cliffs rise on both sides, some of them hundreds of feet in height, and down below in the valley the Colorado River races with terrific speed as through a gruesome tomb. The Indians called this "the devil's pit" and believed that whoever dared to enter it, would never escape with his life. J. W. Powell forced his way with a few companions, in a little frail boat, amid untold dangers and

difficulties. The little expedition had almost reached the end of the canyon when two of the men flatly refused to go any farther. "It is sheer madness," they said, and left. But the courageous professor squared his jaws, cut his way through the last and most difficult part of the canyon, and reached the end in perfect safety.

My dear children! These our spiritual exercises are by no means easy. Oh, no, we need all the courage and persistence we can command. Therefore hold out to the end! May God bless you, and may St. Aloysius guide you on your journey! Amen.

2. IN CAMP

(Third Sunday after Pentecost)

"The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. VIII, 21.)

MY dear children! We have arrived at the gates of Castiglione. No doubt you are expecting great doings. You suggest that we inspect the grand old castle and then go to meet our Saint. Perhaps you imagine that we shall find him in a corner of the beautiful chapel saying his prayers. Some of you are wondering whether he has a halo around his head. Let us see.

We are still standing at the gates, looking impatiently across the moat, which is filled with water up to the brim. The draw-bridge hangs high in the air. Our leader gives a loud blast with his horn, and from the tower the watch inquires: "Who goes there?"—"Good friends," we answer, giving our parole: "Fearless and true!" The bridge comes rattling down, and we march into the court-yard.

Here there is a great bustle! Whole companies in war equipment stand ready to march. In front of the troupes stands a tall knight, whose gold-trimmed harness glistens in the morning sun. He is the lord and master of the Castle, Marquis Don Fernando of Gonzaga, and is just addressing his soldiers.

But who is the little fellow marching straight as an arrow by the general's side? A boy, four or five years old, wearing a knight's harness, with a sword strapped to one side. That is Don Fernando's son, Aloysius. For the first time he is accompanying his father to a military training camp. The general is training his eldest boy to be a brave soldier, and to this end he wants to take him along. The women at home, he thinks, are stuffing the little fellow's head with too many pious notions, and that, of course, is a drawback to a future soldier. Aloysius, mind you, likes to be around his father; he is a true soldier. Just now the little captain has spied us. Advancing towards us, he says: "You came hither to watch a tourney, I see. But times are too serious for that; we are going to the camp to prepare for war. Are you willing to join us?"—"With the greatest pleasure," we answer, and off we go. Excitedly we ask ourselves:

I. *What shall we see out in the camp?*

II. *What lesson can we learn there?*

I

My dear children! Our march leads to a vast plain, where thousands of soldiers are gathered. In the middle of the large camp, near the banks of a mighty river,

lies the great fortress of Castelmaggiore. There are many interesting things to be seen here, and we shall have a busy time around our little captain, Aloysius. Soon we find out that he loves to sit around the soldiers' tents. Every battalion claims the honor of having the general's little son with them. Aloysius is curious about everything. He is especially interested in the weapons which the soldiers carry. Best of all he likes to handle a gun. He says to a soldier: "Mister, would you mind showing me how to load and fire a gun?" He watches the soldier, tries again and again, until he can load the gun and fire it off unaided. One day he was careless, and the gun exploded, blowing the powder charge into his face, so that he was badly burned. Hereafter his father forbade the soldiers to give him gunpowder. But no sooner was he healed from his burns, than he made for the gun again. But how provoking! He cannot get any powder now. But he knows how to help himself. One day the soldiers come back to the camp, tired from drilling all day long. After dinner, while they rest in their tents, Aloysius creeps slowly towards the place where the gunpowder is kept. He takes a big portion of powder and sneaks noiselessly, like a cat, through the camp to the place where the big cannon are. He loads one of them and pulls the trigger. The cannon answers with a deafening roar, jumps backwards, and the little gunner behind it turns a somersault in the air. This started a mighty hub-bub throughout the camp. Nobody knew what happened, until they discovered the little powder thief. You can picture to yourselves how angry his father

was at the disobedient little soldier. He wanted to punish him severely, but the soldiers interceded, and, except for the awful fright he got, no other punishment followed.

From now on we no longer see Aloysius about roaring cannon. Is he doing better? Let us watch and see what he is doing now within the soldiers' barracks. It is rather remarkable that we always find him either sitting within the soldiers' tents or around their camp-fires. What attracts him so irresistibly to them? He has discovered a new excitement. He is listening very attentively and with seeming pleasure to the soldiers' coarse jokes. He catches a word here and there, the meaning of which he does not understand. He knows but one thing, that they all laugh when he repeats the jokes, and to make himself big and others laugh, he keeps repeating them, until his tutor one day overhears him by chance. Greatly alarmed he tells the father what he heard. The father now realizes that a boy of four or five years is, after all, in better hands with the women folks at home than in camp among rough soldiers. And he immediately sends Aloysius, and us too, back to his mother in the Castle.

2

My dear children! We have had manifold experiences with our little "Saint." Can we learn something from what we have witnessed? Most of you are probably thinking: He surely was a queer Saint. And he looks so innocent in his beautiful pictures! Just imagine

a Saint stealing powder and repeating nasty stories! Some of you boys may think: I am as much of a Saint as he was; it will not be necessary for me to make extraordinary efforts to become a Saint. And the girls are probably thinking: Dear me, Aloysius was just like other boys; they are all like that, mean and rough!

When I was a boy, our pastor one day gave me a beautiful picture of St. Aloysius. I was scared whenever I looked at the pale young man and thought: I would rather not be so holy; he was not a real boy. Later on, when I read the details of his youthful life, I was pleased because I found that Aloysius was a genuine boy, playing his youthful pranks like any of us, in the honest way any normal chap will do. When studying for the priesthood I thought I had to become at least somewhat of a Saint, like Aloysius in his pictures. It was then some comfort for me to know that St. Aloysius had been a little rogue in his childhood, but nevertheless became such a great Saint. If, I said to myself, this dainty princeling could make such efforts to become a Saint, why should I not be able to do likewise?

You should do the same, dear children! For this very reason I showed you that Aloysius was not a Saint from the beginning. Nobody comes into the world a finished Saint. Aloysius was a sinner like the rest of us. It was as true of him as it is of us that, as the Bible puts it, "the imagination and thought of a man's heart are prone to evil from his youth." We all have our faults even in early childhood. Or is there any one here present who is without fault? St. Aloysius repeated

coarse words through ignorance and was so eager to shoot that he stole powder. You are very fond of candy and perhaps have stolen some of your father's hard-earned money to buy sweets. You repeated nasty stories and jokes that you heard from bad companions to innocent children without realizing that by doing so you played the part of a seducer.

If you look into your hearts, you will find there one or the other serious fault. Among these is your principal or predominant fault. It is against this fault that you must fight with courage and perseverance, especially during these six Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius. Can Aloysius be your model in this fight? Oh, yes! When his tutor one day heard him saying mean things, he explained to him how ugly and sinful his conduct was, and said to him: "You must stay away from those wicked soldiers!" Aloysius never associated with them again. No mean word ever fell from his lips again. He became a new Aloysius from that hour. All through life he did penance for the sins of his early youth, which he had committed through ignorance rather than malice. Learn from him and imitate him, dear children. Obey your confessor. He must give an account of every child God entrusts to his care. He often points out your faults to you and tells you how to fight them in real earnest. Follow his directions, and you will find yourself on the right road to become a Saint like Aloysius.

The other day I was speaking to a mother whose son is also making the six Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius, not with us, but in another parish. This

mother complained to me that she could see no change for the better in her boy. He was just as lazy at home and as boisterous on the street. My dear children! If your parents make such complaints about you, the old witch you heard about in the last sermon is right, and you had better stay away.

Now, during the coming week, wage a brave, fearless fight. You must be able to do what a dainty prince's son could do and did. With a firm good will and the grace of God and the intercession of our Saint we shall win the victory. Amen.

3. AT THE KING'S COURT

(Fourth Sunday after Pentecost)

MY dear children! Doubtless you were very much amused when I told you of the boyish pranks of little Aloysius last Sunday. He has become your friend because you have found out that he was made of flesh and blood like yourselves. Keep him for your friend, for all too soon you will have to leave the happy days of childhood with him.

To-day he invites us: "Come with me on a journey to the king's court!"

In the central part of Spain more than 2,000 feet above sea level, lies the city of Madrid. It was the most magnificent city in the world in the reign of the powerful king Philip II in the sixteenth century. Aloysius, at the age of thirteen, was sent to the court of this king to be trained in all princely virtues. There

we find him in the midst of princes, knights, and pages. All the splendor and magnificence of a pompous court life is buzzing around him. And the boy of thirteen simply had to share in all amusements. "But how," you ask me, "could a young, inexperienced boy become a renowned Saint at such a noisy, dangerous court?" Instead of answering this question, let us accompany him to one of the fencing matches; St. Aloysius will be:

- I. *Your fencing master, and you*
- II. *His pupils.*

I

My dear children! You must have noticed that Aloysius was a clever, intelligent boy. As he advanced in age, there awoke in him an ardent desire for learning. Best of all he liked those branches which require hard study: arithmetic, composition, astronomy, religion. Latin he found quite easy and succeeded so well with it that he was able to greet King Philip in a fine Latin speech when he returned to Madrid from a glorious victory on the battle-field. A splendid performance, I say, for a fourteen-year-old boy! Needless to say, a boy of such disposition did not care much for the silly doings of the courtiers, but went his own way. Games and entertainments were a matter of indifference to him. But one thing he did: he carefully watched over the purity of his soul, for his experience with the soldiers in camp had taught him a lesson. His tutor often found fault with him because he wore only the plainest clothes. Even when playing with his aristo-

cratic companions he did not disdain to run about in mended breeches. New clothes he wore only when strict court etiquette compelled him to do so. Even then he omitted all superfluous trimmings.

He did not gossip, but appeared to think a great deal. In learned and serious talks he gladly joined. Nor was he ever at a loss for an answer. One day he stood at an open window with the crown prince, when all of a sudden a strong wind arose which disarranged their boyish locks. The crown prince angrily exclaimed: "Quit that, you stupid wind; I command you!" Aloysius calmly remarked: "Crown prince, you can command people and they will obey you; but you cannot command the forces of nature; they are subject to God alone, whom you also must obey."

Aloysius did not like to be disturbed in his prayers and for this reason often hid himself in a woodshed, and when his friends wanted to see him or to play with him, he was not to be found.

2

My dear children! Your disappointed faces seem to say: "But this is not the wild, cheerful boy we met last Sunday. We cannot keep up with him any longer!" I do not demand that you should. We admire many things in St. Aloysius which we cannot imitate. For this reason I have not mentioned to you the hardest and most difficult things he did. Aloysius himself seems to notice your embarrassment and to say to you: "Never fear, boys and girls; there is nothing extremely diffi-

cult in the things which I did. But I know that not everything will suit your taste!" What we really want to learn from our fencing master are the most necessary practices to enable us to fight the great battles of life.

His eagerness in studying, for instance, will do you no harm, my dear children. Of course, I know you are all good and diligent scholars. Your parents and teachers have no doubt about that. But your report cards are not always what they ought to be, and hence there is room for improvement.

You are not living at a king's court, yet you are often found in dangerous places, where you cannot help seeing and hearing evil things. Keep away from these, for they are proximate occasions of sin.

You are not vain as a rule. Your parents cannot afford to clothe you in fashionable style. A handsome, winning face looks as attractive in a polished window pane as it does in a royal mirror.

More or less all of you possess the virtue of silence, especially when you are asked questions in school. This is really a remarkable virtue, dear children, for we know that you can speak very loudly in church or school when you are not supposed to do so, or that you yell on the streets till late in the evening so that the neighbors complain about you very often. And at times you give impudent answers to parents and others in authority,—“like Aloysius to the crown prince,” you think. No, not exactly so.

When your parents complain about your irreverent behavior at prayer, I would like to say to them: “Just

leave your children alone to say their prayers in the woodshed or barnyard, and they will no doubt devoutly—forget them!”

Your great fencing master would probably address you as I am addressing you in his name. It rests with you now to follow his well-meant advice and admonitions. They will enable you to win your battles with the enemy during the dangerous years of youth and by and bye you will turn out to be brave, fearless, modern knights and ladies.

One-half of our court-service in honor of St. Aloysius is now over. Let us start the other half with courage and perseverance next Sunday! Amen.

4. THE GREAT DECISION

(Fifth Sunday after Pentecost)

“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?” (Matt. XVI, 26.)

MY dear children! During our imaginary sojourn in Spain you saw little Aloysius changed into a quiet, earnest young man. To-day I wish to tell you something about the difficulties he had to overcome, in order to show you how to master your own difficulties in everyday life. I will answer two questions:

- I. *How did Aloysius master the difficulties of his youthful life?*
- II. *What can we learn from him in mastering our difficulties?*

I

1. My dear children! You know that the pomp and splendor of the king's court did not blind Aloysius. He regarded with disgust and aversion the frivolous life of the young knights and ladies who spent their time in empty gossip, dances and amusements, and often in even worse occupations than that. His own father was too much under the influence of this frivolous court life. He spent whole nights gambling with friends and lost large sums of money, so that he had to borrow to pay his debts. The observing eye of young Aloysius noticed this. Often he sat in his room weeping, not only because his father was a spendthrift, but also and chiefly because he was in danger of losing his soul. He confided this to one of his servants one day, saying: "Oh, the princes of this world have so many occasions of making themselves forever unhappy!"

Aloysius was destined to be a ruler himself after his father's death. Any other young man would have looked forward to this event with great pleasure. Not so Aloysius. He saw too clearly the tremendous spiritual dangers by which men in high places are surrounded. The words of our Saviour were constantly ringing in his ears: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" No wonder the crown held no charms for him. He planned to evade the golden burden that awaited him, so as to be perfectly free to give his whole heart to God.

On the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Vir-

gin Mary he received Holy Communion in the Jesuit Church at Madrid. As he made his thanksgiving before the image of Our Lady of Good Counsel, he heard a voice within himself saying: "Leave all and follow me! Embrace the monastic life and become a Jesuit. In that state alone will you be able to dedicate your life to your Saviour and to serve the sick and poor!" Now he was happy. The Mother of God had shown him the way. He knew now that it was the will of God that he should leave all and follow Christ.

2. But as soon as he revealed his intention to others his troubles began. First he spoke to his confessor about it, then to his beloved mother, who told his father. The father was greatly displeased when he heard of the plans of his gallant son, of whom he was so proud. He thought the confessor had put the idea of becoming a Jesuit into the boy's head, and curtly refused his consent. Aloysius, however, kept begging and begging. His father consoled him: "Wait until we are home again!" He thought that in gaining time he gained all and in Castiglione he would succeed in persuading Aloysius to change his mind.

No sooner had they arrived in Italy when the father decked Aloysius out in princely raiments and ordered him to pay a round of visits to all the gentry in the neighborhood. Aloysius, now sixteen years of age, was a handsome lad and his father thought if he mingled with the merry young knights and ladies of the principality, the notion to enter the religious life would fade. Temptations were deliberately laid in his path. The plan was carried out, but Aloysius firmly

stuck to his resolution. One day, as he was visiting a palace in Turin, an elderly nobleman frivolously told coarse jokes in presence of his youthful hearers. You should have seen the fire in the eyes of our young knight when he scolded the old sinner: "Sir, are you not ashamed, in your old age and with your high rank, to say such things in the presence of tender youths? Don't you know that such unsavory talk is apt to ruin good morals?" With this he got up and went out. So he always acted, and hence it is no wonder that he returned home from these dangerous trips far more serious than before. He had learned to detest what the world calls amusement and pleasure.

3. Still his father did not abandon hope. A cardinal and a bishop, relatives of the Saint, came to the castle with secret injunctions from the father to make Aloysius change his mind. They told him that if he wanted to become a priest, there was no need of joining a religious order. He had every chance to become a cardinal or a bishop and as such to do much more good in the world, like the great Charles Borromeo of Milan. Aloysius replied: "God wills that I should become a religious; he does not want me to be a cardinal or a bishop." As a last resort, the father sent for the greatest orator of that day to dissuade Aloysius from his resolution. This man succeeded no better than the rest. Later on he related his experience with Aloysius to a cardinal: "I was charged to play the devil's advocate, and did what I could, but Aloysius remained firm."

So, after years of fruitless endeavor, his father finally gave his consent.

2

My dear children! What would you have done if you had been in Aloysius' place? Could we say of you that you remained firm? O children, we are often weak and inconsistent. Let us learn a lesson from our saintly pattern.

Whenever you recognize something as good and right, go ahead and do it! Aloysius saw that he would probably lose his soul if he were called upon to wear a crown. He knew that his father spent whole nights in drinking and gambling. He wished to avoid these dangers and sought shelter in the monastic state.

You, my young friend, look disgusted when you hear a man cursing at his work and fighting with his wife at home, cruelly beating his children in his rage, and you make the firm resolution: "I will never be like that!" But I can tell you right now: When you grow up, you will not be one bit better if you do not overcome yourself in little things now, lose your temper for no reason at all, claim the first and the last word when playing with your comrades, and act like a youthful prize-fighter bullying all who dare to contradict you.

And you, young maiden, know quite well that your father is staying away from home evenings, whiling away his time in bar-rooms and other doubtful resorts, because your mother is forever nagging at him and your

home resembles an auction shop. Perhaps you say: "Wait until I am out of school, then everything will be different!" Let me tell you: You will be no better later on. Even now you think of nothing but pleasure and play. Although you are in the higher grades, you are not learning the duties of a good housewife, never think of helping your poor mother, who is perhaps so ill that she cannot manage things properly alone.

How is it that a boy who detests whisky, later on grows so fond of it? Because in time of real danger he has no staying power, for he has never learned to deny himself and to exercise self-control. He has not the energy to stick to a good resolution. All his resolutions go up in smoke, when the first assault knocks him over.

Children, you must learn to be strong and steadfast in fighting your evil inclinations. Little by little you will gain the upper hand. To make you strong and steadfast is our goal in making these Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius. They are not a pretty parade, they are an earnest rally, destined to give you a firm character. As I told you the other day: I do not care a cent for your confessions and communions unless you grow better as a result thereof. You are not going to the Sacraments in order to attract attention, expecting people to exclaim: "My, how pious and devout the children of our parish are!" You receive the Sacraments in order to become more Christlike. When you go to confession each week, you ought to be able to tell your confessor whether you have become more faithful in observing this or that commandment, especially whether you have

grown stronger in overcoming your principal fault.

Already over half the Aloysian Sundays are over. The resolution which you make at to-day's sermon must be kept, not only until Monday, no, for at least a whole week. You must become firm and persevering. This is what St. Aloysius wishes to teach you to-day. In return give him the satisfaction of putting his lessons into practice. Obey your mother and do not annoy her during the week. Let it be known at school that a child who is making the Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius is a model of virtue to other children. Show your younger brothers and sisters how a child of St. Aloysius can guard his tongue. Do not always insist on having the last word, but learn to give in for the sake of peace. And you, silly little gossip, let us see this week how you can resist the temptations of talking about your comrades! A tongue which stubbornly persists in making uncharitable remarks must feel as if hot coals were laid upon it when it receives the kind Saviour in Holy Communion.

Do you begin to realize now that the six Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius have not been instituted to have a good laugh at the boyish pranks of our Saint? I narrated these only to show you that St. Aloysius was made of flesh and blood just as you are. These Sundays are fighting days, in which we are to use unrelenting harshness toward ourselves, at the same time removing all obstacles on our journey to Heaven. Herein St. Aloysius is a shining pattern. Imitate him! Make a special effort during this week to acquire concentration, firmness, courage, and perseverance. Amen.

5. A VISIT TO THE CLOISTER

(Sixth Sunday after Pentecost)

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. XI, 12).

MY dear children! Last Sunday my conscience nearly pricked me. I feared that I had spoken to you a little too severely. But I notice my sermon did you good and you are now doing your best. Not one among the girls indulged in sinful gossip last week, and disputes and fights between the boys have been less boisterous. The boys are going to show us that they can be punctual not only for sports, but also in attending religious exercises, at church services on Sundays and weekdays, and at the Communion rail. To reward your good will and zeal I will take you to-day on an excursion to Rome to visit the Jesuit novitiate, where Aloysius was allowed to enter after years of opposition. Perhaps he will be good enough to show us his cell.

On a beautiful knoll within the Eternal City stands the Jesuit house of novices. We pull the door bell and ask to see our friend Aloysius. The venerable old Brother who opens the door can tell by the look on our faces that we did not come through idle curiosity, but to discourse with the Saint and to learn from him, and hence makes an exception, admitting the whole swarm of children into the cloistered halls.

1. We feel ourselves strangely affected within these

silent halls. Our way leads through long corridors and up and down several flights of stairs. At last our guide halts and knocks at a door. We listen. No answer. The Brother knocks a second and a third time, louder and louder. A Jesuit Father, passing by, tells us that Aloysius has either gone to the hospital to care for his beloved sick or else is in there praying. He relates how often he had opened the door to take a glance at Aloysius, but never once had the praying religious noticed it. All his thoughts were centered on God. The Father then lifts up his hands, saying: "Now watch! I will open the door; perhaps you will get a glimpse of our friend at prayer." The door creaks, but there is not a sound within. Aloysius is kneeling there, immovable like a marble statue, beautiful as an angel. Our little chatterboxes whisper into one another's ear: "Is it he? My, how pale he is!" And one says: "Look how the tears are streaming down his cheeks!" To this a very small boy responds: "He must be homesick for his mother." In the meantime they have pulled one another into the small room right close to the kneeling Saint. Even this intrusion does not disturb him. The Father goes up to him, taps him on the shoulder, and says: "Brother Aloysius, here is a flock of little visitors who have come to see you. They want to know what your cell is like. Would you please show them around?" "With the greatest of pleasure," responds the young religious, smiling at the children as if he wished to say: "Let them come in!" The Father now leaves us alone with the Saint.

2. He has scarcely disappeared when some girls begin to scream and scramble for the door. Aloysius asks them what is the matter. "Whew," says one of the girls, "there is a skull there!" We stare in the direction indicated, and sure enough, there is a skull on the table, placed so that Aloysius has it right before his eyes. With a smile on his face he takes the bewildered children by the hand, leads them close to the table, and, taking the skull into his hands, he says: "Have a good look at it!" And earnestly gazing into the young eyes, he continues after a short pause: "Do you not know that, after a short time here on earth, nothing will be left of our bodies but a skull similar to this? So many in the world," he continues, "do not remember this, and their hearts dote on the things of this world. We are all too prone to forget that some day the last hour will strike for us. In order not to forget that fact, I keep this skull before me on the table. It constantly reminds me of death, and in times of temptation it seems to say while it grins at me: 'Remember the end, and you will never sin!' At other times it seems to ask mockingly: 'What will all this fleeting pleasure profit thee for eternity?'"

3. While the Saint is still discoursing, one of our boys discovers a scourge lying beside the skull; it is a whip with a dozen leather thongs. The boy asks excitedly: "Have you any dogs or other wild beasts in your room and are you taming them?"—"Well, yes," returns our friend, "a mean old beast lives right here in my cell. Can you tell where it is sitting?" All look

fearfully into the corners, but discover nothing. Smilingly the Saint points his hand at himself, saying: "Here is the wild beast. It crouches within every human breast. Have you never noticed how it begins to storm and rage during temptations? Almighty God bound this beast with ten heavy chains, which He forged amid thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai. The beast pulls and rattles his chains quite often. When you are angry and spiteful, and do not wish to obey, the beast pulls at the fourth chain, which God forged when he said: Honor and obey thy father and mother! And when you are about to steal, the beast secretly tries to break loose from the seventh chain. But the wildest and most furious rattling is experienced on the sixth chain, when filthy thoughts invade the mind and allure the mastiff within to break loose. When this fury begins, prayer alone will not keep the beast within proper bounds, and I use the whip and beat it until it obeys." Here a boy interrupts Aloysius and says: "Surely you do not beat your weak body until it is covered with blood?" And a tender-hearted girl blurts out: "I am certain God does not want you to do that." "Do you not know," answers the Saint, looking up at the crucifix, "why Jesus was scourged? For your sake and mine. Can't you remember the bad boy I was when I lived with the soldiers and repeated their nasty stories? Every sin is a blow in the face of our Crucified Saviour. Should I scourge my Saviour with new sins? No, in times of temptation I beat my own body until it is covered with blood, rather than sin again. I do this

for the love of Jesus Christ, who died for us on the cross. For this reason I keep a crucifix between skull and scourge."

While the Saint is still speaking, the strokes of the bell are heard, calling him to his work among the sick. He goes off at once, but before he leaves the room, he points once more to the table, saying: "Do not forget the skull, the scourge, and the Saviour on the cross. Remember what they teach you, and we shall all meet again in Heaven!"

Yes, children, wherever you may be, think of the skull, remember the end. In times of temptation mortify yourselves. Whenever you do violence to human nature by overcoming your faults, you give the beast within a blow with a whip. You do not need to make your body bleed like Aloysius, but you ought to apply the whip of self-denial and self-control frequently during these fighting days. I know you are resolved to do your utmost. Should self-denial prove too hard a task for you, lift your gaze to the cross, look at Him who suffered and died for you. For the love of Him you should gladly take up your little crosses and practise self-denial.

My dear children! On almost all pictures of St. Aloysius you see the Saint represented with a skull, a scourge, and a crucifix. You know now what these instruments are designed to teach you. Try to get such a picture and hang it over your bed or place it on the little altar in your room, that you may always remember the lesson which St. Aloysius would teach you to-day. Amen.

6. THE CROWN OF VICTORY

(Seventh Sunday after Pentecost)

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Apoc. II, 10.)

MY dear children! What was the last thing St. Aloysius told you last Sunday, when you left him in his cell? No doubt you still remember his words: "Do not forget the skull, the scourge, and crucifix, and we shall meet again in Heaven!" I hope you will never forget these words. They hold a special significance for us to-day, when we stand by the bedside of the dying Saint.

The year 1591 was a very unfortunate one for Italy. The crops failed and this caused a fearful famine. People died by the thousands. Weakened by hunger, they dropped dead in the streets and public places. Very soon there appeared another frightful spectre, which in hot climates always follows famine like an evil shadow,—the plague. Be glad, my dear children, that this frightful disease is unknown to you. It is more terrible than the imagination can picture. The awful distress of the people became the field of activity for many heroes of charity. It was the ardent ambition of St. Aloysius to become such a hero.

I. *We accompany him to his last struggle and to his final victory, and while doing so,*

II. *We think of our own victory.*

I

The hot sun is brooding over the streets and public squares of Rome. They are deserted and gloomily silent. The city has the aspects of a graveyard. Now and then you hear the mournful accents of a funeral bell through the stifling atmosphere. A few sombre figures silently carry a corpse wrapt in a shroud. Behind them staggers a pale-looking woman with despairing eyes. She carries a weeping child in her arms. Suddenly she stumbles and falls to the ground with a faint cry. The child whines pitifully, and then all is silent again.

A young man, tired and pale, now comes up the street, clothed in a threadbare habit, with a beggar's bag strapped around his hips. He sees the prostrate woman with the crying child in her arms. Going up to her, he raises the helpless creature on his weak shoulders, and, leading the child by the hand, drags his heavy burden to a hospital, where he takes care of them. The young man is St. Aloysius, who goes from door to door asking alms and provisions for the sick, and in nursing them seems not in the least worried about the danger of contagion. However, this proved to be his last act of kindness on earth. As soon as he returned to his cell, he fell sick and had to go to bed.

He grew rapidly worse and soon felt that he must die. But he was not downcast on this account; on the contrary, he was extremely glad at the thought of death. Not a minute was he gloomy or melancholy during his sickness, which lasted for three months. Let us pay a visit to him on his sickbed. The pallor of death

is spread over his features. Calm as a marble statue he lies there on his bed of suffering, but his deep eyes sparkle luminously. "How do you feel?" we ask him. Smiling he answers: "I am going soon!" We wonder what he means. "Whither are you going?" "To Heaven, unless my sins prevent me," he says with winning simplicity. He speaks of his approaching death without the least anxiety, as we would of a morrow's pleasure trip. Now he asks us to do him a favor: "Children, sing for me 'Holy God, we praise Thy name!' because I am overjoyed that death is coming for me." My dear children, only a hero can speak like that.

On the evening of June 20, 1591, as night descended on the city of Rome—it was the Octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi—the rays of the setting sun flashed a last farewell to the dying Saint in the quiet cloister cell. He lay there peacefully, his face transfigured with a calm, supernatural joy. His gaze was uninterruptedly fixed with rapture on the crucifix. A priest was watching by his bedside. As the stars rose in the firmament, smiling down on the stricken city, a happy smile played on the dying lips of St. Aloysius; in a scarcely audible tone he whispered the holy name of "Jesus," and his angelic soul was wafted heavenwards. The mournful tunes of a bell announced to his brethren that Aloysius was dead, at the same time consoling them: "Rejoice, there is one more Saint in Heaven!"

My dear children, Aloysius is not dead; he still lives,

not only as a Saint in Heaven, but also as a hero and a leader in the hearts of grateful children.

We stand in spirit by his grave. This young man was only twenty-three years old, but those years were great and successful, for he fought the good fight and performed heroic deeds. We have learned to love St. Aloysius; he has become our friend. Let us plant roses—red roses of love and white roses of purity—on his grave. Let us honor his memory by putting into practice his last will, which is: *brotherly love*.

My dear children, do not hesitate now! Give your hands to one another and say: "St. Aloysius was our fencing-master, our friend and brother in life. Now we must be brothers and sisters for his sake and in his honor!" Are you angry at a comrade and harbor revengeful thoughts against him because he called you nicknames and beat you in the school-yard? Now both of you are standing by the grave of a Saint. Shake hands, be generous and say: "Let us be friends again!" You were a spiteful little girl, and went tattling to the teacher. Your companion is incensed at you now. Be a heroine, shake hands with her and say to the teacher: "What I told you was not true, it was a lie!" You know a person in your neighborhood who has no decent clothes to wear. You have an old but still presentable suit. Be charitable and give him the clothing you can do without. On the same street with you live poor, half-starved waifs, who rarely if ever taste a regular meal, while you yourself sit down to a well-filled table three times a day. Be charitable; eat until your hunger

is satisfied and ask your parents to allow you to take the remnants of your superabundant meal to those hungry waifs.

Some day the last struggle will come for you also. Will it end in victory? I do not know. You too, my child, will some day lie pallid and worn out by sickness on a deathbed somewhere in the wide world, where and when I cannot tell, and your soul will leave the body after the last desperate struggle. How will it appear before the throne of God? I do not know. Keep a picture of St. Aloysius with you throughout life and write the following words beneath it: "I will always be a true Catholic knight and hero! Good-bye, until we meet in Heaven!" Amen.

BE TRUSTWORTHY!

(Eighth Sunday after Pentecost)

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater" (Luke XVI, 10.)

MY dear children! Do you know why the steward in to-day's Gospel lost his place? Because he was an untrustworthy man. His master had made him supervisor of all his possessions and had trusted him fully, only to find out later, with bitter regret, that he was mistaken. Unless some of you watch and correct your steps, you will one day meet the same fate as this steward. Why? Because you already show yourselves as unreliable as this unfaithful steward. I want to tell

you this morning what usually happens to an untrustworthy person and how you may get rid of the bad and dangerous habit of untrustworthiness while you are still young. I will answer two questions:

- I. *What usually happens to an untrustworthy person?*
- II. *How can you become trustworthy?*

I

My dear children! The example of the unfaithful steward clearly demonstrates the consequences of untrustworthiness. A rich man engaged an overseer for his property. It was a fine position, which offered him an opportunity to become rich himself. A conscientious man in such a position would have made every effort to satisfy his master. But how did this steward act? Instead of attending to business, he invited his friends and spent whole days drinking and carousing with them. That cost him a good deal of money, more than he earned. The tempter persuaded him to steal from his master. He probably took only a little the first time, then after a while more, and as time went on he lived so prodigally that the neighbors began to whisper to one another: "Where does he get the money to live in such luxury?" Meanwhile everything went topsy-turvy on his master's property. The servants became lazy and loitered about and soon the sparrows piped from the housetops that mister steward was a spendthrift and a loafer, in short, an untrustworthy man. The master appeared in person one day and when he saw the dis-

order, acted promptly. He sent for the steward and said to him: "You are discharged; I cannot keep an unfaithful man in such a responsible position!" So the steward had to leave, and as he was too proud to beg and too lazy to work, he in time became an expert swindler, until one day he landed in jail.

My dear children! This example shows that untrustworthy persons must blame themselves when they have bad luck. What is worse, they oftentimes drag others into misfortune. For instance, when an untrustworthy father loses his place, the poor wife and children often have to suffer more than he himself.

I witnessed an incident of that kind during the World War. It happened in the hospital where I was stationed. A soldier, the father of several small children, lay badly wounded in a quiet little room. A young nurse was watching by his bedside. She made herself comfortable in a rocking chair with a novel in her hand. Her thoughts were so absorbed by the story that she failed to notice the sick man rising from his bed and going out into the open air in his delirium. When she looked up after a while, she saw the bed empty; her patient had disappeared. "O my," she cried, "how terrible to think he might throw himself into the lake!" The hospital, you must know, was near a deep lake. Trembling with fear and filled with strange forebodings, she ran straight to the lake and arrived just in time to see the poor man sinking in the water. For a moment she stood there dazed, then cried for help, but in vain. It was too late. Seven children had lost their father through the untrustworthiness of a careless

nurse. The poor soul is a complete wreck herself now: living in an insane asylum, she weeps incessantly and refuses all consolation.

My dear children! Untrustworthiness made this nurse forever unhappy and, besides, deprived seven poor children of their father. Frivolity, loose morals, thoughtlessness or slipshod methods may render a man untrustworthy. Many accidents could be avoided if people were more careful. We could trust our affairs and our own selves to others without the least anxiety, if all were entirely trustworthy and conscientious.

2

It is both beautiful and consoling when one can say of a child, "You can depend on him or her"; when a teacher testifies, "This child is punctual and conscientious even to the smallest detail"; when your pastor can say, "I have no trouble with this boy; he attends the children's services regularly and punctually and studies his catechism diligently." Such a child is highly esteemed by everybody.

A great educator in his youth had the bad habit of telling lies. Lying seemed to him as necessary as carrying an umbrella in rainy weather. "Why be at a loss," he thought, "when you can shield yourself against embarrassments with a lie!" One day, as he was walking along the seashore, a kind-hearted old man joined him. It was towards evening, and the first stars were appearing on the firmament. All of a sudden the old man stood still and, pointing to the sky, said to his

boy companion: "Look up at the sky, my boy, and behold the evening star brightly shining between little flecks of brown clouds! You can depend on it any time during the night. When a mariner has lost his bearings, he feels unbounded joy when he spies the evening star; for he knows that he can go by it, that it will never lead him astray. And," continued the aged man, "I always feel like folding my hands when I see the evening star, for it reminds me of the most beautiful thing in the world, a person in whom you can place implicit trust and who will never deceive you." These words made such an impression on the young man that from that day on he made strenuous efforts to become trustworthy in word and deed,—and he succeeded.

Every one of you will think: "I want to become such a trustworthy child!" Strive to reach this goal by all means. Endeavor to become so reliable and conscientious that one may trust you without the least fear that you will break or waste anything, or forget things, or do your duty in a careless way.

I will show you what I mean by some examples. Learn to pass by your mother's open cash box even if it is filled with dollars to the brim, and you are tempted to buy some candy. When your mother sends you to the grocery store with a five-dollar bill, hand her back the exact change, no matter how much the chocolates and doughnuts displayed in the store may tempt you to dishonesty. When you can do that, you are on the way to becoming a trustworthy child.

You can practise trustworthiness every day and show in a hundred ways that you are reliable and honest.

We have to train ourselves in little things if we want to become masters in this art. Our Divine Saviour says: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater."

When your mother orders you to watch the milk or the soup on the stove, you must not spend the time reading a story, but as a trustworthy child you must keep your eye on the stove, lest the milk boil over or the soup burn. If your mother goes somewhere and exhorts you, "Watch the baby while I am gone," you must not, as soon as she is out of sight, set the little one down on the kitchen floor and give him something to play with, whilst you run out to play, forgetting all about your little brother until his loud cries warn you that something has happened to him. A mother who can trust a child, can be away from home for hours without worrying.

Your father may send you for something he needs, saying: "Be sure and be back in ten minutes!" On your way you happen to meet foot-ball players who need a goalkeeper. Don't allow yourself to be tempted by them to one kick, not even a minute of delay, while your father is counting the minutes at home.

My dear children! To be trustworthy is a very important art, which, like writing, cooking, and sewing, can be acquired only by daily practice. You must learn this art while you are still young. Hence practise it daily now. If you do this, you may, after your graduation from school, unhesitatingly present yourself when you read in the paper: "Wanted, a reliable

girl or a trustworthy boy." Your boss will never have to say to you: "You'd better go back where you came from; I cannot employ an untrustworthy person!" Make the firm resolution to-day to become a trustworthy child, on whom father, mother, pastor, and teacher can always and everywhere depend. Be trustworthy in your prayers, at work, and in attending religious exercises. If you have acquired the habit of trustworthiness, you will be spared many bitter experiences in later life; above all, you will not need to tremble at the hour of death. When the Lord comes and asks you for an account of your stewardship here on earth, He will not be a stern judge, but a dear friend, who will embrace you and say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Thou wast faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matt. XXV, 21.) Amen.

HEROES AND COWARDS

(Feast of SS. Peter and Paul)

"He that shall deny me before men, him I also shall deny before my Father who is in the heavens." (Matt. X, 33.)

MY dear children! We celebrate to-day the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul. These two Apostles were heroes of the faith, who died for our Saviour. Yet they did not always act like heroes. St. Paul persecuted the Christians before he became an Apostle, and St. Peter,

as you know, sometimes acted in a very cowardly manner. Think, for instance, of the night when Jesus was seized in the garden of Gethsemani. Peter, in a fit of holy anger, struck the servant of the high priest with his sword and cut off his ear. An hour later, in the court-yard of Caiphas, He sat among the soldiers, warming himself at the fire and anxious to learn what would happen to his Master. A servant maid recognized him and said in a loud voice, so that all could hear: "Thou also art an apostle of Jesus the Galilean!" But Peter denied it three times, and even swore that he did not know Him. At that moment the cock crew, and Peter instantly remembered the words of the Lord: "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." He was sincerely ashamed of his cowardice and repented his conduct.

My dear children! I took the trouble to watch you for a whole year, to find out how you fulfill your religious duties. I noticed at times a striking resemblance between you and St. Peter. I have summed up my observations in a spiritual photograph, which I am going to hold before your eyes this morning. After you have seen it, I will show you what your picture ought to look like. Underneath the photograph I write the words:

Be not ashamed of your faith!

Therefore:

- I. *Be not a coward in the practice of your faith, but*
- II. *Be a Catholic hero!*

I

There was once a boy—perhaps he is still living and here present—a little heavy-weight champion with strong muscles and a big mouth, but at heart a coward. In hurling and boxing he knocked out all his rivals. One day the pupils of the public high school which he attended were taken to the Cathedral, where the teacher wanted to explain to them some architectural detail. The heroic weakling I am speaking of dared not genuflect before the altar for fear his classmates would find out that he was a Catholic. Afterwards a Protestant comrade asked him: "Why didn't you genuflect before the altar? You Catholics are supposed to do that!" He turned red for shame, and another boy remarked: "Aw, Catholics are cowards, I say!" Was not the conduct of this boy very stupid?

There was another young rascal whose rosary fell out of his pocket during a wrestling match. A Protestant boy picked it up and asked: "Who lost this Catholic prayer string?" Some laughed, others sneered, but not one of the boys wanted to acknowledge its ownership. The boy who had lost his beads was even bold enough to remark: "Aw, go on, kid, none of us here is such a praying sis!" The Protestant boy put the beads into his pocket and kept them to this day. What do you think about the boy who acted so cowardly and even made fun of his religion?

There are boys and girls here who repeatedly missed

Mass on Sundays in order to go on an excursion with Protestant children. They were ashamed to tell that they were obliged to attend Mass on Sundays, fearing they would be laughed at. Such behavior is not only stupid, but also ungrateful. I often noticed boys and girls who had graduated from our parochial school only a short time before, go out of my way when they saw me on the street. Others in company with comrades, were embarrassed and looked the other way when I greeted them. And those are the children whom we have guided and instructed, whom we have treated with every possible kindness during their school life! In return these young heroes are ashamed to greet their pastor as a friend!

Children, in Baptism you have received the gift of faith and been made children of God. In Confirmation you became soldiers of Christ and swore to follow the banner of the Saviour. In other Sacraments you have been fairly overloaded with graces. And this is your thanks to Almighty God that you are afraid to raise your cap when you pass by a Catholic church and are ashamed to make the sign of the cross because others might laugh at you! You don't seem to know that in avoiding the sneers of your comrades you are running right into the devil's claws.

2

Thank God there are real *heroes of the faith* among our children, who are not ashamed to bend their knees before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who openly confess their faith, no matter who hears it.

A young Catholic girl who attended a public school had lost her rosary in the class-room. She went weeping to the Protestant teacher and said: "I have lost my First Communion beads; please help me find them, there is a special indulgence attached to every bead." The whole class heard what she said and some started to giggle. But the teacher immediately called them to order. She searched for the child's rosary and handed it back to her after it had been found. This girl was a heroine of the faith.

Little Mabel was riding in a train. In the same coach with her were some men who furiously denounced a Corpus Christi procession, calling it superstitious nonsense that ought to be forbidden by law. After the girl had listened to the conversation for a while, she interrupted the men and said indignantly: "Listen, you men, our pastor says that you who now deny and blaspheme the Saviour, will be only too glad some day when He comes to you on your deathbed!" The men stared at the girl in surprise and one of them growled: "Hold your tongue, you forward vixen, and mind your own business!" But they did not dare to continue their frivolous conversation.

You boys are no doubt displeased because I have related only cowardice of boys and praised the girls for their heroism. I did this on purpose. I know boys and girls thoroughly and my experience is that the boys are, as a rule, rough and rude when they are up to some devilry, but cowardly even in blessing themselves at table. The girls, as a rule, practise their religion more faithfully and defend the faith when it is at-

tacked in their presence. I hear you boys say that the girls are all sissies! You might just as well say that they are too ignorant to imitate your stupidities! You may be angry at me now, but that will not do you any good. Show me that you are not mere braggards and fighters, but that you can be heroes of the faith. Then only will you have a right to consider yourselves as good as the girls. If you will prove to me that you are heroes of the faith, I am ready to make peace with you.

St. Peter became a noble hero of the faith. He was the first Pope in Rome. Only once more fear got the better of him. During the persecution of the Christians under the cruel Emperor Nero, he fled into the Campagna one night. From a distance he was able to hear the roaring of the wild beasts in the amphitheater tearing the martyrs to pieces. Terror seized him when he thought of the awful sufferings of his flock. Trembling and unsteady he hastened along the dark, lonely road. All of a sudden a sad-looking man, bent under the weight of a heavy cross, met him. St. Peter at once recognized his Master and was greatly astonished. "Master," he asked, "whither goest Thou?" The Lord gave Peter a sorrowful look and answered: "I am going to Rome to be crucified once more." St. Peter stood there, speechless and bewildered, gazing after his Master, until He had disappeared into the night. Then he immediately returned to Rome and died a martyr's death.

My dear children! Is not the sorrowful reproach of the Saviour also meant for you, because you are too

faint-hearted to confess Him before others? Imitate the example of St. Peter, retrace your steps, boldly profess your faith like a brave Catholic hero! Amen.

TOO LATE!

(Ninth Sunday after Pentecost)

MY dear children! Did you ever see a picture of an Oriental city with innumerable mosques and countless copper domes glittering in the sun? Just so the city of Jerusalem must have looked at the time of Christ. And yet the Gospel tells us that He wept over the city. Why? Because its inhabitants stubbornly refused to accept His Gospel. Not many years later Jerusalem was levelled to the ground.

The fate of the Holy City is repeated in the life of those children who never learned to obey their parents and refused to listen to good advice from others. To spare you a similar fate, I am going to preach to-day about two silly expressions, namely: "*If I only had*" and "*If I only were!*"

I ask you:

I. *Why do you not want to obey?*

II. *Why will you be punished for your disobedience?*

Some of you with an uneasy conscience may think: "Oh, why did I not stay away from church to-day and instead make an excursion somewhere!" To think thus is worse than foolish. What I am going to tell you this morning is of the utmost importance for your whole future life.

I

How often did not your mother admonish you: "Stay away from that sewing machine or you will hurt yourself some day!" But you keep turning the wheel all the same. Why? Because you are stubborn and think: "What harm will it do to make the wheel spin round and round?"

How often did not your father and mother, pastor and teacher advise you: "Avoid such and such a comrade, or else you will be spoiled in the end!" You promised, but did not keep your promise. Why not? Because you thought: "Nonsense! That ruffian cannot influence me. Rather will I teach him better manners." Evidently it is pride that causes you to be disobedient!

How often were you warned not to cross the street right in front of a street car or a speeding automobile! Why do you persist in doing it nevertheless? Because you are a disobedient, stubborn child.

Frivolity, imagination, and obstinacy form the trinity that inspires you to act contrary to the advice of your elders. But you will have to pay for every act of disobedience. I am going to show you by some real instances taken from everyday life what commonly happens to those who do not heed good advice.

2

What happened to the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants in punishment for their obstinacy and dis-

obedience? Was the Saviour's warning only a bugbear to scare them? No. Forty years later the Roman general Titus conquered and completely destroyed the unfortunate city. Through the carelessness of a soldier even the beautiful temple, which the victorious general wanted to spare on account of its costly ornaments, went up in flames. Everything happened exactly as our Divine Saviour had foretold.

Not long ago I read of an accident on the river. A boy wanted to paddle across in an old canoe which had been out of commission for a long time. People warned him not to venture out so far. He refused to heed the warning. Amidstream the boat capsized and sent the poor boy to a watery grave.

When Joe was still very young his parents often reprimanded him because of his greediness. He was especially fond of cream, and drank it whenever he could, despite his parents' prohibition and warning. After his graduation from high school Joe went to college and gradually became a spendthrift. At college he needed very much money, and as he could never get enough of it, he incurred debts. To repay his creditors he started to swindle others. One evening he murdered a man who sat alone on a bench and robbed him of all his money. The student had become a robber and a murderer. He is now in the penitentiary atoning for his crimes and incessantly rebukes himself: "Oh, if I had only obeyed my parents!" Oh, yes, "If I only had," "If I only were," but his lamentations are useless. It is too late now.

Often such folly is also punished in eternity. Think

of the frightful end of the Apostle Judas. Had he not been lovingly warned and admonished many times by our Saviour Himself? But the devil of avarice sat in his bones. He heard, but did not want to heed, and so he planned his terrible crime, betrayed the Saviour, and later committed suicide. Can you imagine his fate? Our Divine Lord Himself said of him: "It were better for him if that man had not been born!"

My dear children! You all are inclined to think at times that you know better than your parents, pastor, confessor, and teachers. You imagine that they dislike you, that they want to begrudge you your little pleasures, and so forth. This is not so; your parents, priests, and teachers seek only your welfare. They know from experience that many things which fascinate you now will harm you in later life. Therefore heed their warnings and follow their advice. It is for your own good. Amen.

ON TO WORK!

(Tenth Sunday After Pentecost)

MY dear children! Vacation is almost over, and in a few days the schools will re-open. This implies for many of you a lot of disagreeable duties. But cheer up! I know a wonderful medicine which will lighten your burdens and render them bearable, if not agreeable. Can you guess the name of that medicine? It is *work*. You will have to learn to work some time if you wish to be useful and happy. In order that you may

learn how to work strenuously and hard, I am going to preach to you to-day a special sermon explaining to you why you must work. You children must work:

- I. *Because God wills it.*
- II. *Because you owe it to your dear parents.*
- III. *Because work draws down God's blessing upon you.*

I

My dear children! It is the will of God that we all should work. Even Adam and Eve had to work in the beautiful Garden of Paradise. God commanded them to toil and till the soil. We read in the very first book of Holy Scripture: "And the Lord God took man, and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it, and to keep it" (Gen. II, 15). And after their disobedience, God imposed on them as a penance the burdens and hardships of painful labor. Our Divine Saviour Himself, who is our model in all things, worked for almost thirty years in the shop of His foster-father, St. Joseph. Then, entering on His public life, He labored almost every day preaching the Gospel, visiting the poor, and healing the sick. He was incessantly active for our sake and toiled and suffered for us to the very last moment of His life, when, dying on the cross, He bowed His head and cried: "It is consummated!" The disciples followed the Master's example. St. Paul, who lived in a time when there were no trains, steam boats or airships, traversed nearly the whole then known world, preaching the doctrine of the Saviour. Besides

he worked at his trade, which was that of a tentmaker, to earn his own livelihood. So thoroughly was he convinced of the necessity of labor that he writes in one of his letters: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thess. III, 10). The Saints were all hard-working men or women, and next to the grace of God it was chiefly their own work that earned for them an eternal reward in Heaven.

2

You must work, dear children, because it is the will of God. Another motive to make you industrious is the gratitude and love you owe to your dear parents. Let me give you an interesting arithmetical problem to solve. In your spare time sit down and count the dollars your parents have spent for you from the first moment of your life to this very day! From the first swaddling clothes to the newest dress and the newest shoes, to the lunch you are going to eat in a few hours and which you will take as the most natural thing in the world, not worthy of mention. What an immense sum, do you think, will be the result of this calculation? In addition, parents oftentimes send their children to college, imposing upon themselves all manner of privations so as to be able to pay the expenses of board, tuition, clothes, etc. Considering the heroic sacrifices which parents make to give their children the very best education, do you not think it heartless and in the highest degree ungrateful, if a child repays them by idling away his school hours and wasting his time? Any child with a

spark of love for his parents will do his utmost to be diligent and industrious, and thus to show his appreciation of what his parents are doing for him.

3

My dear children! We must work because God wills it and we owe it as a debt of gratitude to our dear parents. But we should be glad to work also for this reason, that work draws down upon us many blessings for body and soul, both here and hereafter. Holy Writ says: "Man is born to labor and the bird to fly" (Job V, 7). A bird which is no longer able to fly feels uneasy and helpless. So it is with man when he is no longer able to work. A healthy man who idles away his life is bound to become sick sooner or later, whilst the one who regularly goes about his daily work remains fresh and healthy both in body and soul. "Idleness is the beginning of all vices," runs a proverb, and another one says: "Labor is balsam to the blood and the fountain of virtue."

Work keeps mind and body in good health, and, what is even more important, it brings success and makes for happiness. A poet once said: "When work moves in, poverty moves out; when work falls asleep, poverty creeps back again."

You are old enough to realize that without work there can be neither progress nor success nor comfort. Picture to yourself a farmer staying in bed every morning until nine o'clock, instead of working out in the fields. Can he expect a good crop? His fields will yield

more weeds than grain. Or imagine a business man sitting in a pool-room gambling all day long, whilst his employees in the store or office or workshop do as they please. What will be the outcome of running a business that way? Or think of a student who, instead of paying attention in school, perpetrates silly stunts and at home never opens his books to study. Can he expect a fine record? No. In order to be successful in life, one must strive and work. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance that one should learn very early in life how to go about one's work in the right way. He who is lazy in his youth is apt to become a loafer later on. How often, dear children, have older folks bitterly regretted that they had spent the days of their youth in idleness and sloth! "Would that I had obeyed my parents and teachers," they say, "and had spent my time more usefully, then I could hold a better position to-day!"—"If I only had," "If I only were," these are the two silliest expressions in existence. You will never have to use them in your old age if you are industrious now, in the days of your youth.

Once upon a time there were two sisters, busy Mary and lazy Mary. One day busy Mary sat on the rim of a well spinning flax. She hurt her finger and let the spindle drop into the water. Fearing the reproach of her stepmother, she immediately sprang into the well after the spindle. When she landed at the bottom, a door suddenly opened before her, leading to a fairyland. Stepping through the doorway she came into a bright green orchard with rows of apple trees teeming with ripe,

rosy fruit. "Come shake us, we are ripe," called the apples. Mary shook the trees until all the apples had fallen down. Then she came to an oven filled with loaves. "Come take us out," cried the bread, "we are done!" Immediately Mary took the bread out of the oven. At last she came to the hut of Mrs. Holly. She entered and served the old lady faithfully for a whole year, pounding and shaking the pillows so vigorously that the downy flakes began to fly all around and covered the earth with snow. After a year's faithful service Mrs. Holly gave her leave to go home. As she passed through the gate of fairyland, a shower of gold rained down upon her, covering her from head to foot. Thus arrayed, she arrived at home. The rooster on the gate-post, seeing her, flapped his wings and crowed with all his might: "Cockle-doodle-dee, here comes our golden Mary!" Her sister, lazy Mary, seeing all this and hearing about the adventures of busy Mary, threw herself into the well in a fit of jealousy. As she came to the green meadow, the apples called on her: "Come shake us, we are ripe!" "No," said lazy Mary, "you might fall upon my head!" The loaves in the oven cried: "Come, take us out, we are done!" She shouted angrily: "No, you might burn my fingers!" Finally she reached the home of Mrs. Holly, but served her so unsatisfactorily that Mrs. Holly was glad to get rid of her at the end of the year. As she passed through the gate of fairyland on her way home, a shower of pitch rained down upon her. Covered with pitch she arrived at home. The rooster on the gate-

post flapped his wings and began to crow: "Cockle-doodle-dee, here comes our pitchy Mary!" The neighbors flocked together and had a good laugh at her expense.

My dear children! You know that this is a fairy tale. But it contains all the lessons that I want to point out to you this morning. Such busy and lazy Marys are to be found everywhere, not only among girls, but also among boys. The busy ones are liked by everybody and are sure to become useful men and women some day. The lazy ones are the cross of parents, priests, and teachers and usually turn out loafers. You have your choice, children. To which class do you wish to belong? You surely want to succeed in life. Well, then, start in right now, at the beginning of school; prepare your home lessons diligently day by day, never go to bed without having your school work completed for the next day. Should this seem difficult at times, say a prayer to the Holy Ghost or a Hail Mary, and you will receive help from above. When you receive a good report at the end of the school term, you will realize how true is the proverb: "Work and strife sweeten life!" If you grow habituated to regular work in the days of your youth, you will become respected, honored, and prosperous men and women. And after your life's work here on earth is done, our Divine Saviour will give to you an eternal holiday, addressing you in the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant! . . . Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. XXV, 21). Amen.

THE BEST AND THE WORST

(*Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost*)

My dear children! To-day's Gospel relates how our Saviour cured a deaf and dumb man. Can you picture to yourselves how happy this poor man must have been, when he could talk and hear like other people? It grieves us whenever we meet a deaf and dumb person, who is so awfully handicapped without the heavenly gift of speech. And yet, for many, perhaps, it were better if their tongues were paralyzed for ever. One thing is certain: Most of the damned are in hell because of sins they have committed with their tongues, these little busybodies so full of deadly poison.

A great poet was asked what he considered the best thing on earth. He said: "The tongue, for without it nothing good could be done." Then he was asked which was the "worst" thing. And again he answered: "The tongue, for it has wrought unspeakable harm."

The poet was right. The tongue is both the best and the worst thing. Hence it is necessary for you to learn the proper use of the tongue. To assist you in this important task, I am going to study the twofold answer of the poet and inquire:

- I. *Why is the tongue the best thing on earth?*
- II. *Why is the tongue the worst thing?*
- III. *What must we do that our tongues may be the best and not the worst?*

I

My dear children! The tongue is the best thing on earth. How strange must a child feel who for the first time opens his mouth in an effort to say Mama or Papa, and finds that his tongue fails him! Pity the poor mother who must raise such a child! Are those not the happiest hours between mother and child when the baby begins to prattle? With what rapturous delight father and mother observe a child's efforts to enunciate his first words, and how they rejoice when he tries to utter his first prayer to the Holy Child Jesus!

Speech is, no doubt, the grandest and the most wonderful gift of God to mankind. It is man's special prerogative among creatures. By means of it he can clothe his thoughts in words, commune with God in intimate converse, praise and glorify the Creator in hymns and canticles, as no other creature can. Speech, which is symbolized by the tongue, is certainly a most precious gift.

How powerful it renders man! What did you do when you saw your mother weeping over some misfortune? You ran up to her, lovingly put your arms around her neck, tenderly stroked her brow, clouded with sorrow and worry, and endeavored to console her with words coming straight from your heart. Oh, what consolation can the words of a sympathetic child bring to a sorrowful, afflicted person! I experienced this myself last year during my vacation.

My aunt had lost her only son through a dreadful

accident. She happened to be at our house when I came home. As soon as she saw me, she started to weep convulsively. I tried to console her, but either could not find the right words or they stuck in my throat. My little nine-year-old sister noticed my embarrassment and decided to help me out. She got her story-book, opened it, sat on a little foot-stool by my aunt, and said to her: "Auntie, do not weep so over Charlie's death; he does not like it. Look, it is written here in this book that the souls of departed children in Heaven do not like to see their mothers weep." And then she read out in her sympathetic voice, a wonderfully consoling story. The bereaved mother listened with apparent relief. The child succeeded where I had failed. In her simple way she had calmed the broken-hearted mother.

2

Language is something sublime; no power on earth can withstand its irresistible force. Think of the inspiring words of a gifted orator or a famous general or a father or a mother. One inspiring word can transform men into heroes and Saints.

My dear children! We willingly agree with the poet that the tongue is the best thing in the world. And yet there was an ancient pagan fraternity which one could enter only after keeping absolute silence for three years. And in the Catholic Church there is an Order whose members (the Trappists) pledge themselves in their final vows not to utter a single unneces-

sary word. They salute one another in the morning with the solemn words: "*Memento mori!*" (Remember, thou must die). Why do these men take such an awful penance upon themselves? Because there is nothing so difficult to master as the tongue, and because no other member of the human body has done so much harm; in a word, because the tongue under certain circumstances is the worst thing in the world.

I said a little while ago that one inspiring word can transform men into heroes and Saints. But the tongue can also transform men into sinners and criminals. Through the tempting words of the devil sin and misery came into the world. The first sin was committed through the devil's tongue, and ever since the tongue has been an instrument of temptation, confusion, and discord. The Apostle James says: "The tongue is such a small member, but see what harm it can do!" Men kill one another on account of a frivolous, thoughtless word. Old ties of friendship are torn asunder by silly gossip. Think of all the hard feeling and enmity you have caused by malicious gossip at home, among your relatives, and among yourselves! Do you realize what harm a single word spoken in anger and excitement can do? Do you know that many suffer all their life long from the consequences of an uncharitable remark? And are you aware of the harm that a foul tongue can do by unsavory and sinful speech? How many innocent young hearts are poisoned and robbed of their innocence through the mocking, frivolous conversation of evil comrades? In

summing up the harm done by this little talking machine within us, we must admit that the tongue is not only the best, but also the worst thing in the world.

3

Now let me ask you: Why is the tongue both the best and the worst thing in the world? This small, ever-wagging pendulum within us knows exactly what it is able to do, and for that reason it becomes so conceited and proud at times that it acts just as it pleases. Whenever children, for instance, begin to disobey their elders and do as they please, nothing good can come of it. So it is with the tongue. Hence it must be bridled like a young colt, so that it may become tractable and taught to keep out of mischief. You must learn to master your tongue from childhood up, else it will do with you what it pleases. Above all, you must train it to speak only after you have carefully considered the matter in hand.

Beware of *thoughtless speech*! Do not engage in idle gossip! Bear in mind this important rule which will save you much embarrassment: "First think, then talk!" Keep your tongue within proper bounds and do not let it run away with you! Restrain your tongue when you are tempted to criticize others and ridicule their faults, or to tell questionable jokes in order to make others laugh. Above all, beware of discussing other people's faults and do not repeat dishonorable things about your neighbors. If others make uncharitable remarks, frankly say to them: "Are you

a garbage collector? Sweep first before your own door!"

And lastly, do not desecrate your tongue by indulging in impure conversation. The place where the priest places the sacred Host on the altar must be covered with a spotless white linen cloth. To lay the Host on a dirty cloth would be an insult to Jesus Christ. My child, how often has the priest placed the sacred Host on your tongue? How disgusted must the Saviour feel when He rests on a vile and smutty tongue!

Some of the things which I have told you to-day may have stirred up a still small voice within you, which says: "That was meant for me!" If so, make the firm resolution to examine your conscience at night prayers every day as to how you used your tongue. Train yourselves to employ your tongue only as a tool for good, always to keep it within proper bounds, never to let it do as it pleases! Remember that some day you will have to give an account of the use you have made of your tongue. This account will not be difficult if you follow the advice which I have given you, and, what is more, if you faithfully carry out in your daily life the good resolutions you have made this morning. Amen.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF!

(Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost)

My dear children! In your Bible History you will find a picture which represents the incident related in to-

day's Gospel: the good Samaritan dressing the wounds of the man who fell among the robbers. What did our Lord wish to teach us by this parable? He wished to make clear to us the fundamental commandment of charity towards our neighbor. He wished to demonstrate that all men are our brethren, whom we must love, and He wished to show us how we should practise this commandment. It is proper, then, that I should speak a few words to you this morning about the love of neighbor. I will answer these two questions:

- I. *Why must we love our neighbor?*
- II. *How must we love our neighbor?*

I

Our Divine Saviour said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!" (Mark XII, 31). And another time: "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another, as I have loved you. . . . By all this shall men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John XIII, 34 sq.). Some of you may think that we may love only our relatives, friends, and countrymen, or that we may love only the good and hate the wicked. By the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus condemns this erroneous opinion. The Samaritan nursed a man who was a stranger to him and, besides, a native of a country hated by the Jews. We must imitate this heroic example, we must love every man, help everyone in need, even our enemies, for the Lord expressly declares: "Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that you may become yourselves children of your

Father who is in the heavens, for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and he raineth upon the just and the unjust. If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the very same?" (Matt. V, 44 sqq.)

Did you ever stop to consider what these words mean? A true Christian must do good to everyone, even to those who hate and persecute him. He must pray for his enemies, as our Divine Saviour did on the cross.

Do you know, dear children, why a true follower of Christ must do this? We all pray the "Our Father" every day. Now if God is your Father and my Father and the Father of all men, then we are all His children, brothers and sisters, and whenever we hurt one of our fellowmen, we offend the Father who loves all His children. Hence, we must love all men because all are children of the Heavenly Father!

There is yet another reason why we must love all men without exception. Supposing someone treated your little brother roughly. What would you do? Now Jesus is the Brother of all men and is infinitely more fond of each of them than the very best brother in the world could possibly be. Do you know what this dear Brother has done for all His brothers? Whilst they were condemned to an eternal prison, He bought them and set them free, paying the ransom of their redemption with His own blood. Since He has become our Brother, Jesus has charged each one of us to treat our fellowmen as we would treat our own brothers and sisters.

A poet once wrote a beautiful story about the Boy Jesus, which shows how He regards the things we do to others as done to Himself.

When Jesus was a boy of about fourteen or fifteen years, He used to accompany His foster father, St. Joseph, who was a carpenter, out into the country to assist him in his work. On one occasion they had both been away from home for several weeks. The Blessed Mother at home sent a message to St. Joseph to let the Boy come home. St. Joseph answered that Jesus would come home on a certain day, at a certain hour in the evening, and asked her to prepare a good supper, because they had not had a good meal for ever so long. Mary prepared everything for a cordial welcome; she cooked a delicious supper for her darling and sat down near the window to wait for Him. Meanwhile it began to rain hard, and presently a ragged little boy knocked at the Blessed Mother's door and asked to stay until the rain was over. He also asked for something to eat, saying he was poor and had not had a warm meal for a long time. The Blessed Mother told the boy that she was poor herself and had prepared all she had for her own boy, who was now drenched and hungry on his way home, and whom she expected at any moment. The strange boy left and sadly went out into the pouring rain. Mary waited and waited, but Jesus did not come home. She waited all through the night, and the next and the following day—but in vain. At last Jesus came with his foster-father, St. Joseph, on the evening

before the Sabbath. His mother reproachfully asked Him why He had not come home when she so anxiously expected Him. The Boy answered: "I came home at exactly the hour I was announced; but you barely let me in because you were afraid I would soil the clean floor with my muddy shoes. You did not seem to care very much for the poor boy in ragged clothes and let me go without having given me anything to eat." The mother grew sad when she heard this, for she understood that the boy who had knocked at her door had been no other than her beloved Son. From that day she treated all men without exception as she treated Him.

My dear children! Learn from this story how to practise the love of neighbor! Treat all men whom you meet as you would treat Jesus Himself were He to come to you for a piece of bread or a drink of water. We should nurse a sick person as we would Jesus Himself were He sick among us; we should treat the poor and needy as we ourselves would wish to be treated were we poor or in distress. All the great heroes of charity and the Saints acted on that principle.

I am thinking now of St. Martin of Tours. When he was a young soldier he met at the city gate of Amiens a half naked beggar shivering with cold. Without a moment's hesitation St. Martin took his sword and divided his mantle into two equal parts, one of which he gave to the poor man. The following night the Saviour appeared to Martin in a dream, clothed with the mantle which he had given to the beggar the day before, and said to him: "What you have done

to the least of my brethren, you have done to me."

Here is another instructive story showing how you should behave towards your parents, brothers, and sisters. The holy hermit Macarius received a big bunch of grapes as a gift. What do you think he did with it? He sent them to a sick brother hermit, who, in turn, forwarded them to a third, he to a fourth, the fourth to a fifth, the fifth to a sixth, and so forth. The grapes went to every hermit in the community, until the last brother brought them back to Macarius. That was the right sort of charity. Love thy neighbor as thyself!

Dear children! Do you act that way? I am afraid you do not. Little Anne received a bag full of apples, dates and peanuts from her uncle. What did she do with all these goodies? Did she divide them with her brothers and sisters? Oh, no. She crept into a corner behind the woodshed for fear Chester and Viola might ask her for a bite. How mean and selfish is such behavior! You must be ready to share your very last bite with your brothers and sisters. It is safe to say that a child who shares nothing with parents, brothers, and sisters, will never share anything with a stranger. These children later on become selfish, heartless sons and daughters who will look upon a feeble old father or mother as an unbearable burden and can hardly wait until they close their eyes forever. Needless to say, such heartless creatures have nothing to spare for their fellowmen.

When St. John, the favorite Apostle of our Lord, grew old and infirm, he had himself carried to church

on a stretcher every Sunday, and from his stretcher preached to the people. Oh, how intently they listened to the words of this venerable old man, who had seen the Saviour with his own eyes and had leaned upon His breast! The older and feebler he grew, the less he was able to say. At last he uttered only six words: "My little children, love one another!" The people asked him one day why he always preached the same thing. The aged Apostle answered: "The Lord commanded me to do so; if you do that, it will be enough."

My dear children! This morning many of you will again receive Holy Communion, the Sacrament of Love. Like St. John, you will lean on the breast of the Lord! No, more than that, the Good Samaritan will enter your heart. And He will say to you too: "My little children, love one another! By this I shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." Amen.

GRATITUDE

(Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost)

"Were not ten made clean? Where are the nine?" (Luke XVII, 17.)

My dear children! What does our Divine Saviour desire to express by this question: "Were not ten made clean? Where are the nine?" Jesus experienced such ingratitude quite frequently during His earthly life. Think, for instance, of the Apostle Peter, who in his cowardice was so ungrateful that he swore in the

court-yard of Caiphas: "I do not know this man," namely, the Saviour. Sad to say, examples of ingratitude occur also in the lives of children. Hence let us say a few words about the virtue of gratitude.

I

A wounded soldier sat in a street car. He had his arm in a sling and his head was covered with a heavy bandage. A fashionable lady entered the car and seated herself beside the soldier without saying a word to him. No sooner had she taken her place when she started to sniff the air very ostentatiously with her little powdered nose, and, with a furious glance at the wounded man, finally remarked very angrily: "Dear me! You are nowhere safe from meeting wounded soldiers; wherever you go, you get the nasty smell of carbolic acid!" The wounded man lowered his eyes, but said nothing. The other passengers, however, grew furious; they made the conductor stop the car and the ingrate dame had to get off immediately amidst the mockery and scorn of her indignant fellow travelers. What do you think of her conduct, children?

You will say: she was an unmannerly, impudent person! The soldier had received his wounds fighting for his country, protecting those at home, this fashionable woman included, and in return she insulted him. Such ingratitude hurts keenly. Imagine you would give a piece of bread to a hungry child, and in return the child would spit into your face.

The behavior of this woman was silly and stupid.

She was thinking only about herself and lost her temper over a little harmless odor. She, no doubt, realized how silly she had acted when she was forced to leave the car amidst the scorn of the other passengers. Stupidity and haughtiness—this noble pair usually go hand in hand.

Brute beasts are often more grateful than reason-endowed men. It is said that St. Jerome once found a young lion in the desert roaring with pain from a sharp thorn in his paw. St. Jerome removed the thorn and bandaged the wound. From that moment the grateful lion followed him like a faithful dog, and on one occasion even defended him against robbers.

2

What lesson should we learn from all this, my dear children? We should learn that gratitude is a beautiful virtue.

And why is gratitude such a beautiful virtue? Because a grateful person *appreciates* what others do for him, and we all like to see others appreciate favors which we do them. How pleased St. Jerome must have been with the gratitude of the lion! And how pleased is everybody with good, noble-hearted children, who are grateful for even the smallest favors!

Gratitude reveals a noble heart, fine breeding, and good manners. Not silken frocks, nor dollars in the pocket, nor patent leather shoes make a person agreeable to others, but the virtue of gratitude does.

You have occasion every day to practise the virtue

of gratitude. It is not a difficult art, all that is required is good will and appreciation.

Above all, be grateful to your parents. Most children never think about the gratitude they owe father and mother. They simply take it for granted that parents must feed and clothe them and send them to school to learn something useful for life. Parents are here for that, you think, and hence you have a perfect right to be spiteful and disobedient towards them and to make a sour face when they ask you to do something which is not exactly to your taste.

Once I read about a young, rich farmer's wife who locked up her feeble old mother in a dark, filthy corner of the farm house and would not allow anyone to visit her. The only food she gave her during the day was a thin, watery soup. The authorities got wind of this unnatural treatment and severely punished the heartless and ungrateful daughter. How do *you* behave towards *your* parents, and how will you treat them later on, when they will grow old and feeble and perhaps depend on you?

Be thankful also to your priests, teachers, and other benefactors. How often one hears you talk disrespectfully about them. You dig up any little fault they may have and make a fuss over it. Yes, you even believe that you have a perfect right to display open animosity towards them when they are in duty bound to punish you. They do all in their power to train you, so that you will be able to support yourselves when you grow up. And all the thanks they get for their efforts is unbecoming behavior and disrespectful remarks on your

part. Is there not much room for improvement also in this regard?

Your greatest benefactor is our Divine Saviour, who died for you on the cross, gave you the faith, and in His Sacraments furnishes you with the graces which you need to obtain Heaven. Yet you often grumble when you must say your prayers or when you have to get up a little earlier in the morning to be on time for Mass.

Listen to this story: Three boys were riding on a boat on a mountain lake. The boy who steered the boat was the son of a poor haymaker, the other two were fashionable city lads. They kept rocking and swaying the boat until it capsized and all three passengers were thrown into the water. Fortunately the accident happened near the shore, so that their cries for help were heard by other tourists. A wealthy gentleman quickly rowed to the scene of the disaster and pulled the three boys out of the water. They were almost drowned. As soon as they had been brought to shore, the two city boys ran off without as much as a look or word of gratitude towards their noble rescuer. The son of the poor workingman, however, gratefully gave him his hand and then dried himself in the sun. The next day he came barefooted and in shirt sleeves to the hotel where his rescuer was stopping and presented him with a beautiful bouquet and a kettle full of juicy strawberries which he himself had picked. He wished to show his gratitude by bringing the best he had. The distinguished guest was deeply touched by the boy's gratitude. He gladly accepted the presents

and he and the boy ate the strawberries together before the astonished eyes of the other guests. The two city lads were never seen or heard of again.

What do you think about this incident, my dear children? Does it not show how beautiful is gratitude and how ugly ingratitude?

Strive to be grateful at all times,—grateful towards God and men, and you will be liked by everybody. Amen.

WHAT THE ANIMALS TELL US

(Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost)

“Behold the birds of the air!” (Matt. VI, 26.)

OUR Divine Saviour bids us to behold the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. We will do that and a little more, my dear children. Jesus directs our thoughts quite often to the life of animals and plants, to show us how God’s creatures in furs and feathers, as well as pastors and teachers, can give us most beautiful and salutary lessons.

You are not accustomed to listen to a sermon given by animals and plants because you are city children. You have ears and hear not, you have eyes and see not. You are happy only when you can yell and romp in dusty streets and stuffy playgrounds, but you have not learned to walk with open eyes and ears into the woods and fields to listen to what God is saying to you through the voice and the life of animals and the color and beauty of plants. I will give you a little

instruction by which you may learn to understand the language of animals. Some day we may have an opportunity to wander through woods and fields and to attend the school of birds and animals.

So let the animals preach a short sermon to you to-day, and learn two things, *viz.*:

I. *What do the animals preach to us?*

II. *What do the animals ask of us?*

Do not smile, my dear children, for the animals have many serious things to tell us.

On a certain street there is a house which has a window, and behind that window sleeps little Sam. In front of the window stands a big apple-tree. A pretty finch is perched on a branch of this apple-tree in his finest Sunday attire: cream-colored trousers, rose-colored waistcoat, and over all a black-trimmed green frock, and on his head a little blue cap. His bill is polished to a bright blue. It is Sunday morning about seven o'clock. The bird is whistling through the window. Sam awakes and drowsily rubs his eyes; then he goes over to the window and the following dialogue takes place: "Good morning Mister sleepy-head!"—"Good morning Mister finch!"—"It's time to get up, Sam! The bell for Mass will ring in a minute."—"What! Is it that late? But you yourself have only just crawled out of your feathery nest."—"No, indeed, Sammy, I crawled into my Sunday clothes three hours ago and have been singing the praises of God ever since. Better say your morning prayers and hurry so as to be in time for Mass!" After this conversation the finch intones the second stanza of the hymn "Holy

God, we praise Thy name," and Sam says his morning prayer, dresses quickly, and hurries off to Mass.

My dear children! *Behold the birds of the air! They teach us to rise early and to say our morning prayer devoutly.*

In the afternoon, Sam, Maggie and the rest of the family would like to go to the "movies." But daddy says: "No, this is an exceptionally fine day; we'll ride to the woods instead." This decision provokes sad faces and muffled growls. But the children have to agree, for they know that their father does not brook opposition. The finch, perched in the tree, sees the procedure and grins. He winks to a sparrow and to a robin, two of his particular friends. The parents and children crowd into the family car and make off for the woods. They park the car in a shady nook and take a stroll through the woods. Sam in a grouchy mood grabs a stick and swishes off the heads of flowers and shrubs that bloom along the wayside. This starts a general rumpus among the little feathered folk. The hedge wrens wrathfully start scolding: "You impudent chap, why do you destroy our little paradise?" and somewhere up in an old oak tree a speckled woodpecker starts thrumming: "Leave our flowers and bushes alone, you little rascal! so that others who will pass by can enjoy them." A red-headed squirrel, scudding up a tree, sits down on a branch and threateningly swings its bushy tail: "You greenhorn! Keep your distance or I'll bombard you with flinty acorns!" And a magpie somewhere up in the air bugles: "Look out, look out!" At the same instant Sam gets a sound cuff on

the ear. His father sternly rebukes him: "You knock off all those flowers, and I am giving you a box on the ear to show you how it feels! The flowers, birds, and animals do us no harm, my dear children, hence leave them in peace. We must not wantonly destroy God's beautiful creatures just because we are in an ill humor." Sam, ashamed of himself, seems to understand the lesson and muses: "What, if a giant came along and smashed our house and cut off our heads?" Treat others as you wish them to treat you! Behold, my dear children, *how the plants and animals give us a remarkable lesson in fraternal charity.*

After a while the father decides to rest and to take a bite. Sam is contrary again. He refuses to eat his sandwich. His father at first says nothing. A robin nearby has caught some flies and is feeding them to the young ones in its nest. It twitters into Sam's ear: "I surely enjoy my meal because I am hungry; I get the same thing every day." And some finches nibble at a nettle stump and sing: "My, but Sam is a stupid boy; we better nibble and not look around." And a squirrel holding a nut between his paws takes out the kernel and, throwing the empty shell roughly on Sam's head, snorts: "Who does not eat at the right time, must take what the others have left." Sam flings his sandwich angrily into a nearby bush. A fox sitting by the entrance of his palace marks the spot and grins: "My goodness! Men are a queer tribe! A ham sandwich won't harm me with my daily ration of mice, rats, and rabbits." An owl peeping out of a hollow tree stump, makes a wise face and hoots: "No wonder

people are so badly off at times. They are never satisfied with what they have. We animals are so much wiser. We quietly eat the meals our Heavenly Father kindly provides for us each day. But wait, you spoiled brat, some day perhaps you will learn to eat bugs, mice, and rat-tails to satisfy your hunger, while we still shall have plenty to eat." The owl speaks the truth, my dear children. *Let us learn from animals to receive our daily bread gratefully from our Father in Heaven.* Then we can sincerely pray: "Give us this day our daily bread," and need never worry about tomorrow and the day after.

Now the sun is setting and it is growing cool. The evening shadows are creeping like black giants through the woods. Father and children turn homewards. They meet a hunter standing behind a tree with a gun, ready to shoot. He imitates with a whistle the cry of a doe, to lure the roebuck from his hiding place into the open. But the buck is a foxy fellow; he sneaks around the bush examining the whistler from behind and sniffs the air. Behind him stand his charming wife and two of the cutest little roe kids in speckled frocks. The buck is musing: "Aha, I smell a man. Good evening, Mister Hunter. Pleased to hear that you understand our language so well. It's all right, but you won't catch me." He blows a sharp whistle and the whole roe family plunges into the thicket. The roebuck, don't you see, prays after his own fashion: "And lead us not into temptation!" Can we here not learn again from animals? And lead us not into temptation! My dear children! Such hunters are hiding in ambush in

show windows and on street corners. They are the devils who would entice you to sin—to kill your soul. Beware, whom you trust; avoid wicked comrades and tempters.

Meanwhile father and children have reached their car and start on their way home. The sun is setting in glowing purple colors. They arrive at home just before dark. A black bird perched on a tree before the house is singing a beautiful evening hymn—his *night prayers. We will do the same.*

My dear children! The animals gave us a splendid sermon to-day, full of good and wholesome instruction. Be thankful for this favor. Often go to the woods and fields with open eyes and ears, and love God's creatures, the birds and animals and plants. Don't pull a cat by the tail or beat a dog for nothing, nor tear out the legs of flies and torment bugs. The Saints loved animals. You know the saying: "Do not torment an animal, for it feels the pain like you!" Amen.

POLITENESS

(Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost)

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke XIV, 11.)

My dear children! An old beggar sat at the front door of a monastery. A Brother in brown garb gave him some bread. The poor man said at least ten times, "Thank you," and with a whimsical smile on his wrinkled face began to nibble at the bread. After

observing the beggar for a while, I sat down beside him on a stone bench and he related the following story: "Father, I will tell you what happens when a man in his pride and vanity strives after things which he is unable to reach. Through industry and skill I had accumulated a fortune and bought me a fine, large farm. Soon I was the richest man in the whole district. But wealth made me rude, heartless, and stingy, and, besides, I was foolishly ambitious. I ran for the office of mayor, but the people turned me down. The defeat made me furious and I hated the new official. One night I lay in ambush for him near the edge of a steep canyon, slew him with a heavy stick and threw his body into the gulch below. The court spared my life, but sentenced me to the penitentiary for twenty years. Not long ago I was dismissed, and now I am sitting here, a despised, miserable old beggar, grateful to the Brother in there for the alms he gives me. Dear Father, tell this story to your people, and especially to the children, so that they may learn to be humble and modest." I promised the unhappy old man to do this and to-day, my dear children, I am fulfilling my promise. This story shows you that you need a training in politeness. This will be more evident when we consider two kinds of children:

- I. *Impolite children, and*
- II. *Polite children.*

I

Our Divine Saviour thought a great deal of politeness. He resented the impolite manners of the self-

conceited Pharisees, who were always fussing over the best places at table and in church. My dear children! Let me hold a looking-glass before your eyes. Look into it carefully and tell me whether you see an impolite or a polite child.

"Who comes tramping up the stairs like an elephant?" father sitting at table asks and swings angrily around in his chair. "It is Felix, to be sure, the unpolished blockhead; he never can lift up his feet!" Here he comes. "Whoopee!" the door opens with a kick and fat little Felix rushes into the room, throws his books into a corner, sticks his hands into his trouser pockets and begins: "Ma, gimme a slice of bread with butter on it, you gave a slice to Elizabeth just now!" Looking-glass, what kind of an elephant is this? Yes, my dear children, this is a real elephant! He acts like a boor and treats the whole family as his slaves. The behavior of this young cub is anything but polite. At times this cub wears skirts and bobbed hair; but very seldom.

"You bet your boots, I know it all, kid!" is the correct signature underneath many a looking-glass image; for many children are inveterate boasters and braggards. When I relate an adventure with wolves and bears, for instance, there is one who shot a hundred bears and saw a dozen lions. Or when I explain a pencil drawing, a would-be young artist tells me all about his latest oil painting. I can swim a mile, but the lad who "knows it all" can swim across the English Channel in three hours. And so on. There are always some who do big things—with their mouths. Their

tongues never stand still and their conversation is interlarded with such words as "I, me, mine, myself." Do not fool yourselves, children; nobody respects a braggard and a snob, neither his companions nor others. "Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger, and not thy own lips!" says Holy Scripture.

Look at a pussy-cat, my dear children. She is a gentle beast and purrs contentedly as long as you rub her soft fur-coat. But all of a sudden sharp claws shoot out of her paws and scratch your face. The mean old thing! The politeness of some children is of the same kind. To your face they are as amiable as a cat and as smooth as a looking-glass, but behind your back they poke fun at you. I have a letter to mail and ask: Who will take this letter to the post office for me? A friendly boy offers his services; he is always willing to run such errands. Why? Because he has neglected to study his catechism and by running an errand for me during instructions, escapes from being questioned. And when his parents at home scold him for his laziness, he has this excuse: "How can I know the lesson when Father always picks me out to do something for him?" Can you see the claws of the cat hiding behind the smooth paws? It is not true politeness when you are willing to do a service only in order to profit thereby!

2

How should your politeness be, so that it may please our Divine Saviour?

A really polite child is known by his *general good*

behavior. When you meet him on the street, a polite boy has no sparrows under his cap, and if he wears no cap, he has no stiff neck. His greeting is loud and friendly. A polite girl will, besides, make a little curtsy or give a friendly nod. Polite children talk in public only when asked to do so, without sticking their hands into their pockets, and at table they do not grab the choicest morsels, and gobble down their food like turkey gobblers, keeping an eye on their brothers and sisters, for fear they might get an extra spoonful.

Polite children are known by their *modest, unpretentious ways*. When they relate something which they have experienced, they do not drag the ass in first and do not blabber all day about their virtues and heroic deeds. A polite child does not insist on having the last word, whether right or wrong. You see it quietly taking part in a game, whether it is made Chief Sachem or plays the most inconspicuous part. If some one shows you a basketful of pears, saying: "Help yourself, take all you want!" you must not grab the whole basket, but be satisfied with a few pears. And when somebody gives you a present, do not begin sniffing around in case you don't like it. "Do not look a gift horse in the mouth," runs a proverb.

A polite child is *always obliging and ready to do others a service*. If you meet a tired-looking woman with a heavy load on her shoulders, offer your help, even if you are a dainty city maiden. It is not beneath your dignity, even if you are a sport champion with a dozen medals pinned to your bosom, to wheel a baby-carriage or to pick up the baby's nipple if it has fallen

to the ground. Such little courtesies are very becoming to a young hero and a noble damsel. "He who humbles himself shall be exalted." A courteous boy will also open the door to visitors whenever they wish to step in or out. Or, when he meets a traveller at the depot, he will take his satchel on his own shoulders and show him the way to a street car or a taxi.

With hat in hand and courteous manners you will make your way through the world and reach Heaven. Politeness is a despised rose among thorns, or a hidden princess in the garb of a Cinderella, whom God sooner or later will bring to light and reward. Eleanor, the daughter of a rich merchant, and Barbara, the daughter of an humble chauffeur, sat side by side in the same class-room. Eleanor, an impudent, forward girl, always wanted the first place. Barbara was a quiet, simple girl, but endowed with heavenly gifts and sparkling with sunshine in spite of the poor clothes she wore. Her mother was a hard-working woman, who trained her child to be polite towards everybody. Little wonder that Barbara was soon at the head of her class and a general favorite with teachers and playmates, whereas only a few took Eleanor's part. This was more than the elegant girl could stand. She begged her parents to take her away from this hateful plebeian school. They engaged a private governess, and as time went on, Eleanor became a good-for-nothing, shameless hussy. After a carousal lasting a whole night she was found dead in bed one morning—poisoned. Barbara became an excellent teacher, highly esteemed by all. "He who humbles himself shall be exalted." My dear children!

Not a loud voice, or fine hair, or a pretty frock, or the purse of a wealthy father render a child pleasing in the eyes of God, but the gold hidden within the heart: true, simple politeness. Amen.

YOUR GUARDIAN ANGEL

(Feast of the Guardian Angels)

"Their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. XVIII, 10.)

MY dear children! To-day the Church celebrates the Feast of the Guardian Angels. I gladly speak to you about the Guardian Angels whenever I have a chance. But here comes a saucy little fellow and asks: "Father, how is it, do Guardian Angels really exist? I never saw one!" My dear children! Is it necessary that we must see all things that exist? You never saw God, you never saw Heaven or hell, you never saw numberless cities and villages, and mountains and lakes, and the vast ocean,—and yet you know they exist. Why, then, are the angels invisible? Because they are spirits, and spirits have no bodies. You never saw your own soul, and yet you can think and pray, and learn, and laugh. An angel is a spirit, like the soul, only much wiser and more powerful. Here another small boy asks the question: "If angels are spirits, why are they pictured with long, curly hair and golden wings?" Oftentimes angels were sent by God in human shape to appear to men on earth. Think, for instance, of the angel sitting on the sepulchre of the risen Saviour. But what about

the wings? Angels have no wings. Artists paint them thus to indicate the difference between angels and human beings and to impress us with the fact that they are messengers sent by Almighty God. Our Saviour, whose words you most assuredly believe, expressly teaches that on earth every man has a good angel by his side to guide and protect him.

Hence let us consider two questions to-day, namely:

I. *What is your Guardian Angel to you?*

II. *What do you owe your Guardian Angel?*

I

My dear children! Your Guardian Angel is your *friend* and *protector*. As his very name indicates, he is sent by God to guard and protect you against dangers of body and soul. And he fulfills this difficult task faithfully by day and by night. None of you would be alive to-day if your Guardian Angel were not constantly at your side, protecting you against dangers too numerous to mention. Children are, as a rule, thoughtless and surrounded by a hundred dangers without being aware of it. You walk home from church or school playing and chatting. All of a sudden a show-window across the street attracts your attention, and you rush thither. It was almost a miracle that you landed there safely, for a heavy truck came speeding right behind you. In your excitement you did not see the truck, but your Guardian Angel saw it and saved you in the nick of time. The little child of a depot agent sits between the rails, playing. An express train comes tearing

along. At the last moment workmen employed nearby perceive the danger and rush to the rescue. Too late! The heavy train has passed over the child. But the terrified mother finds her child unhurt, stretching its little arms out to her with a gleeful smile. Who kept the little child in a motionless position so that the train did not harm it? The Guardian Angel. Once upon a time two children were picking berries in the woods. They had gone astray and lost their way. They cried incessantly, but nobody came. Deeper and deeper they went into the thicket until night overtook them. Tired to death they laid themselves down at the foot of a tree and soon fell asleep. When the first sunbeams shone through the green forest trees next morning, the children noticed with amazement that they had been lying on the very edge of a steep precipice. Who had guided these children and inspired them to pass the night under this particular tree? Who had kept them from taking another step? Their Guardian Angels.

Your Guardian Angel protects you. He often speaks to you, if you would only heed his voice! He is the *counsellor of your conscience* and your *soul's adviser*. Four little girls were playing near a forest. A fashionable gentleman joined them and promised to give each of them some candy and to show them a fine berry patch in the woods if they would come with him. The children were for a moment undecided what to do. But a voice within warned them: "Don't go with that man!" And instantly all four of them ran away. The fashionable gentleman was really a bad man who had evil intentions. Who warned the children in time?

Their Guardian Angels. This good friend and protector and adviser is your faithful companion all through life. He stepped to your side the moment you arrived on earth, never to leave you until God will summon your soul into eternity.

2

And now, my dear children, let us answer the second question: What do you owe your Guardian Angel?

You owe him first of all great *reverence*. Your Guardian Angel is far superior to any human friend. He is a great and glorious spirit endowed with wonderful gifts, a friend and messenger of God. A famous poet used to boast that he was an intimate friend of the King of England. He would mention this fact frequently in company with friends and emphasize the words: "My friend, the King of England!" Your Guardian Angel is far superior to any king and you have every right under the sun to say emphatically: "My best friend, my Guardian Angel, that mighty, illustrious prince of God!" Be proud that your Guardian Angel is and always will be your best friend, who stands by you in loyal fidelity.

Your Guardian Angel demands from you *obedience*. Why are there so many accidents and why do we hear so many bad things about children? Has their Guardian Angel, perhaps, not done his duty? It is just the opposite. Children who get into trouble usually have disregarded the advice of and disobeyed their Guardian Angels. This was the case with a certain Francis, a boy

of thirteen. He had secretly taken his father's pistol and gone to the woods to do some shooting. On the way a very uneasy feeling crept over him. The pistol in his pocket and the hand that clutched it burned like fire, and an inner voice kept warning him: "Take the pistol back home, an accident might happen to you!" But no, a thirteen-year-old boy is brave and unafraid. As might have been expected—a workingman brought the boy home in the evening. He had shot himself in the leg, which was badly shattered. Our Guardian Angel does not force us to obey him, dear children, he only warns us. If we stubbornly persist in disregarding the warning, then we have only ourselves to blame for the consequences that follow our imprudent acts. As I have pointed out to you already, you are surrounded by a hundred dangers day and night, dangers to body as well as to soul, and most of the time you are not even aware of them. What an onerous task for your Guardian Angel to protect you day and night! And how amazingly little you care for him! I should not wonder if you would forget him altogether after you leave school. Sunday before last I spoke about gratitude. Next to our Blessed Saviour, it is no doubt your Guardian Angel to whom you owe sincerest gratitude. Pray to him daily, and especially when you find yourself in dangerous situations. Soldiers who fought in the World War tell us how often they miraculously escaped dangers on the battle-field by the aid of their Guardian Angels. We have to battle daily against the attacks of devils and wicked men. The least we can do to show our

gratitude is to say an Our Father now and then to our Guardian Angel; he does not expect more.

Sometime there will come an hour of joyful surprise for all of you: the hour of death. After your soul will have left the body, you will see and know the heavenly spirits, and you will have the happiness to meet your Guardian Angel face to face, to admire his glory and beauty, and to thank him for the services he has rendered you here on earth. Let us hope, my dear children, that this will be a happy reunion and that you will not have to be ashamed to face your Guardian Angel. Amen.

GOOD HABITS

I. EARLY RISING

(Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost)

“The wise man will give his heart early to the Lord that made him.” (Eccl. XXXIX, 6.)

My dear children! Your vacation is now over and no doubt you have all had a jolly good time. After weeks of freedom it will now be hard to return to the regular order. Perhaps you have fallen into some bad habits, of which you will have to rid yourself. When you examine your conscience before going to confession, you will probably find that during vacation some bad habits have crept into your soul without your being aware of the fact. Hence I am going to preach to you to-day and on the next four Sundays on certain good

habits which you must cultivate now, while you are young, no matter how difficult it may be. It is a commonplace truth that a man will take with him into his adult life the habits he has acquired in his youth. Holy Scripture says: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. XXII, 6). This truth is confirmed by daily experience.

To-day I am going to preach on a good habit which guides and directs the whole tenor of your daily life. Can you guess what I mean?—I mean *rising early and promptly at daybreak*. I do not advise you to begin plaguing your mother as early as three or four o'clock in the morning. No, jump out of the feathers on time so that after a devout morning prayer and a sufficient breakfast you may have time enough to arrive punctually in church and school! Now I know from experience that you children cannot be easily prevailed upon to quit a warm, cozy bed early in the morning. You do it only when you look forward to something worth while. Hence, let me explain to you to-day why you should rise early in the morning and why you should make this a habit for life. You should rise early because

- I. *God wills it;*
- II. *All great men have been early risers;*
- III. *It is a most healthful and beneficial habit for children.*

I

My dear children! God is jealous of the first moments of the day; they belong to him in a very special

sense. Holy Scripture says: "They that watch for me in the early morning, shall find me" (Prov. VII, 17). And: "The wise man will give his heart early to the Lord that made him" (Eccl. XXXIX, 6). Why does Holy Scripture stress the necessity of early rising? Now recall, for a moment, a morning at your own home. Mother approaches the bed, calling: "Johnny, get up, it's time for school!" Johnny is as deaf as a door-post. His mother, coming nearer, shouts in his ear: "Johnny, get up, it's time for school!" Up comes John's head. "Gee whillikens! It is still pitch dark, mother! Couldn't you let me stay in bed five minutes longer, just this one time?" He turns around, pulling the blanket over his ears as a protection against any further molestation. But his mother insists: "Johnny, it's high time for school; I tell you now for the last time, get up!" But Johnny pretends to be deaf and dumb. His mother, tired of his manœver, finally pulls the blanket away and pulls him out of bed. "It is so hard to wake a gang of sleepy-heads in the morning!" is the lament of nearly every mother. If it were not such a serious matter, it would be highly amusing to watch this performance in the morning, when mother wakes Johnny and his brothers and sisters for school. They yawn and whine and stretch and implore and bawl! And when at last they begin to realize that it is really high time, they get up and dress helter-skelter. Johnny tears his shoe-strings; Maggie grumbles and scolds Max for having mislaid her geography; Rose recalls that she forgot to solve her arithmetical problems. And so on. There is scarcely time for breakfast, and in spite of all the rush

and hurry, they are late for school. All the way they run at top speed, with pounding hearts, because they know the teacher will reprimand them for coming late for the fourth or fifth time in two weeks. During school hours they are dull and distracted, as one can see by their inattention and their wrong answers. No wonder, the blessing of God is missing—there was no time left for morning prayer! Do you realize now why you should rise early and promptly, and why Holy Scripture says: "The wise man will give his heart early to the Lord that made him"?

2

History tells us that all or nearly all great men and women were early risers. Religious Orders make early rising a strict rule for their members.

There was once a famous king. When he began to grow old and feeble, he found it hard to rise early in the morning. So he slept longer once in a while. But he soon became dissatisfied with himself because he could not bear the thought of being a sleepy-head in his old age. One day he sent for his valet and said to him: "I strictly charge you to call me at four o'clock in the morning. Don't let me stay in bed a minute longer. If I fail to heed the call, then give me a trouncing!" Next morning the servant called him at four o'clock, but the old king whimpered: "Oh, let me sleep a few minutes longer; I feel so tired this morning."—"But Your Majesty charged me strictly to wake you at four o'clock!"—"Yes," said the king; "but to-day let me

sleep only a quarter of an hour longer; I am so tired." But he met the right man. "Not another minute, Your Majesty," said the servant roughly, "it is now four o'clock and I take no excuse whatever!"—"You are plucky," answered the king, getting up, "it surely would have gone hard with you if you had let me stay in bed one minute longer!"

3

My dear children! Do you think it did the king any harm to rise early? On the contrary. The habit of rising early is healthful and prolongs life. It keeps the mind fresh and is a safeguard against many sins. Many hateful habits are formed and good qualities are crippled during this idle snoozing and brooding in the morning. An old proverb says: "It's the early bird that catches the worm." Another one: "The early morning hours are golden." Another rule of life runs: "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Old folks who have attained to the age of eighty, ninety, or a hundred years, were no mollicoddles in their younger days. They rose early on cold and warm, sunny and rainy days. I ask you, my dear children, will you be sluggards and mollicoddles or men and women who make the most of the beautiful, fresh hours of the morning and rise early and promptly? Make up your mind to rise early from now on. God wills it, and it is good and healthful for you.

My dear children! When you receive Holy Communion this morning, say to your Saviour: I resolve

to rise early and promptly every morning and I will with a joyful heart offer the first moments of each new day as a sacrifice to Thee, O God. I shall then have time enough to ask Thy blessing for the day by means of a devout morning prayer. If you go to bed early in the evening, you will not find it so hard to get up early the next morning. Should this nevertheless be difficult for you at times, then let your mother remind you of to-day's sermon and tell her to act as promptly and inexorably as the old king's valet. Let us see how much staying power you have in keeping a good resolution. I shall soon find it out in church and at school whether or not you have formed the habit of rising early. Remember, this excellent habit will assure you a long and happy life, after which you will greet eternal daybreak in the beautiful morning light of heaven. Amen.

2. CLEANLINESS

(Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost)

"Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. III, 16.)

My dear children! Did you rise early this morning and during the week? Had you time enough to wash yourself? There seems to be a noticeable improvement among the long sleepers. Now they at least apologize when they are late for Mass, or say, "Mother did not wake me in time." Do you know by what sign one can tell whether you got up late? By your faces and hands. It always amuses me when I read in the Gospel how

our Divine Saviour tells the Pharisees that they did not wash their faces when they fasted, nor comb their hair, nor trim their beards. You must not let anybody notice it when you are fasting, He said to His disciples.

You are not obliged to fast, my dear children! But you must always be neat and clean. I will preach to-day on cleanliness, though it has seemingly nothing to do with religion. You need not turn red. I know you are all clean even on week-days. This concerns only those who are absent.

I. *Cleanliness adorns the body;*

II. *Cleanliness is a sign of a pure soul.*

I

My dear children! I invite you to-day to join me on a trip to the Zoo. We walk straight through the main avenue, along which are the cages of the lions, wolves, tigers, and other wild beasts. In front of the Aquarium we turn to the right and soon arrive at a velvety lawn, surrounded by large oak trees. Here is the spacious birdhouse, which we enter to make some interesting observations. What a lively show of twittering, piping, chirping birds! They are all interesting. But we have come hither to-day to study a special kind, the finches. As you can see, there are different kinds of finches: chaffinches, smug and clean with freshly polished bills; thistle finches, dapper little fellows with winning manners, not a speck of dust on their yellow-black coats; yellow finches and reed finches, a flock of freshly washed, clean comrades. And other finches there are

with different names: dirt finches, dust finches, hallelujah and ink-blot finches—a remarkable company.

Let us inspect these latter members of the finch family a little closer. They look almost like little boys and girls, only it is difficult to distinguish whether their faces are white, yellow, black or red, all the colors of the rainbow are smudged on them. But they all have one feature in common; you can see around their bills what they ate for a whole week, and their earholes are dirty. These so-called earhole finches wear no bonnets on their heads and have no smooth feathers, but a sort of barbed-wire fence instead. Their neck is marked by a dark clay ring upwards and a shiny flesh-like ring downwards. Their claws resemble human finger-nails, only it is difficult to find out whether they are used to grab food or to dig holes in the ground or to mix paint. They are said to have been white once upon a time. The plumage of these finches is conspicuous for many ugly holes and dirty spots, which are, no doubt, intended to keep enemies and persecutors at a distance. These finches are highly valued and in great demand for their thrilling songs, which resemble the wild yells of little street Arabs, hence their surname, yell or squeak finches!

Just now something very funny comes to my mind, dear children. A good many of you remind me of these dirty little finches, with this difference, that you look cleaner and more polished to-day than they usually do. I may be mistaken; perhaps they resemble only those who are absent! But you will all have to agree that these human specimens of the finch family are ugly

and disgusting! Let us beware of them; they smear school benches and walls with chalk, pencils and ink, blotch books, and like to splash around in mud puddles. I do not know if you ever saw these finches at liberty. I warn you, avoid them whenever you can. It is the will of God that we should keep our bodies clean. Holy Scripture says: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. III, 16.)

We are all houses and temples of God, not finches or sparrows, hence we must always be clean. Invisible disease germs hide in filth and bore little holes into the body which cause it to get sick. The only way to defend yourself against the dirt finches is to set the cats of cleanliness on their track. They will catch them and eat them up.

And what is the name of these cats of cleanliness who are to catch and kill the dirt finches?

They are: water, washrag, clothesbrush, and soap! Should the three latter prove too expensive, you can at least afford to use the first, water. Water is cheap and you need not be afraid to apply it liberally.

But this cat has claws! It is wet and sometimes icy cold. After crawling out of a warm nest in the morning children do not like to wash with cold water, but rather spit on their finger tips and rub their faces with them. Shame on you! How can you overcome this cowardice? Only with a washrag and water! Repeat the struggle day after day until you have acquired that habit of cleanliness which is so necessary for all. But be careful not to fall into the other extreme. Avoid vanity!

2

A clean body is the outward sign of a clean soul. One who likes to be dirty gets used to dirt and is apt to take pleasure in dirty thoughts and conversation.

Vitriol is a strong poison. A drop of it on cloth will burn through and injure the skin. Outward dirt filters into the soul. It is a common experience that dirty children also have a soiled soul, whereas neat and clean children usually have a pure soul. A great philosopher said: "The way a man dresses his hair reveals his soul." This is very true, especially regarding young people, who often use exterior polish to hide interior uncleanness. Those who wash themselves regularly and keep themselves spotless are enemies not only to material dirt and filth, but also do everything to keep the soul clean.

My dear children! Cleanliness is a mirror of the soul. Even though vanity struts about in fine clothes, a dirty soul will grin at you through the eyes and garments. A colored boy at the age of twelve was left an orphan and asked for admission to a Negro school. The principal looked him over and then ordered him to clean two rooms. The boy did this with such care and diligence that not a speck of dust could be found in the rooms after he got through. The principal gladly accepted him, and he became a famous teacher and orator.

My dear children, keep both your body and soul clean and you will one day be admitted into Heaven, where nothing unclean can enter. Amen.

3. ORDER

(*Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost*)

"Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Cor.
XIV, 40.)

MY dear children! To-day you are all nice and clean. The cats of cleanliness have killed and devoured all the dirty finches. But I heard that some mothers scolded about the children's sermon last Sunday, because they had to buy so much soap during the week. One mother had to tell her daughter that, though the sermon last Sunday was about cleanliness, she need not stand at the wash basin all day and admire her face and neck in the looking-glass. She probably meant that if the pastor could see your room at night after you had gone to bed, or on a Sunday morning when you are ready for Mass, he would give you a lecture about neatness and order. Have a little patience, good mother, we shall come to it; one thing after another. We know very well that a good many of our boys and girls need a stiff lecture on order. Therefore we are putting a fine pair on the platform before you to-day. Do you know their names? "*Joe Disorder*" and his sister "*Lizzie*."

I

My dear children! Let us pay a visit to Joe and his sister Lizzie.

1. They live not far from school. We arrive at their

home long after school hours. But Joe isn't home yet. At last, half an hour later, he comes lumbering up the steps, bangs the door, and flings his school books in a corner. Then he moves towards the kitchen, groaning: "O mother, I am half starved!" "Dinner will be ready in five minutes, Joe," replies his mother, "can't you wait that long?" "Oh, no! I cannot hold out another minute," he says, grabs the bread basket and saws off a huge piece of bread. When he has devoured half of it, he notices that his mother is getting ready to put some home-made noodles into a dish. He sneaks out of the kitchen, hides the remainder of the bread and returns to prey on the noodles.

Now Lizzie appears on the scene. She drops her books on the floor, flops down in a chair, and grumbles when her mother places a vessel in her hands to rinse it. She grabs the first rag that lies around, it doesn't matter whether it is a dust rag or a dish towel—leisurely rubs around the vessel, and then wipes it with the roller towel which her father uses when he shaves himself.

And now dinner is ready. Our noble pair is unusually punctual to-day, because noodles are on the bill of fare and they are fond of this dish. They only think of eating. Prayer might interfere with the noodles. They come to the table like a certain bristly beast to the trough, and run off again in the same way when their stomachs are full.

2. After dinner they do not help wash the dishes nor do they study their lessons. There is lots of time

ahead for such talented scholars as Joe and Lizzie. And then, why worry about home tasks if you have an industrious and obliging partner sitting beside you in school? Joe knows how marvelously a little lie can help you out of a pinch, and Lizzie doesn't care a fig. Let the teacher scold, she thinks; scolding does not hurt, and if the teacher would dare to whip her, mother would promptly complain to the principal.

And so this blissful pair goes out to play. The game begins with a quarrel. Joe cannot find his ball and declares positively that Lizzie had it the last time; he threatens to slap her if she does not go to get the ball at once. Lizzie runs crying into the house and learns that mother picked up the ball the day before in the yard, where Joe in his carelessness had left it. They make up and play a while, until they get tired and run out into the street. The room which they have just left is in wild disorder. It's mother's business to straighten it out.

3. Poor mother! How hard she has to work every morning, especially on Sunday! How often she misses Mass because she is too busy cleaning the rooms of Joe and Lizzie. And what a sight these rooms present! In one corner lies a pair of overalls and a shoe; the other shoe is under the bed. In another corner lies a dirty shirt and on the floor are big lumps of mud. In short, the room is in a frightful mess, not a thing in its own proper place, not a hint of order anywhere. Whenever Joe and Lizzie need anything, they usually do not know where to find it.

My dear boys! Did you ever come across Joe Disorder? And you, girls, do you know his sister Lizzie? There are too many of such children. But is it really as bad as all that? Yes, it is worse than you think. Seriously: Do you know what will happen to Joe Disorder when he is grown up? Can you imagine what Lizzie will have to go through when she will be a woman?

A noted criminal, who was sentenced to be hanged, when standing under the gallows, said to his executioner: "Oh, if my father had only taught me to hang my clothes up neatly and orderly before going to bed, I should not be standing here to-day!" Maybe you can guess what this unfortunate man meant. He never learned to be orderly in his youth. He had, perhaps, a silly, soft-hearted mother who always followed her boy about, setting things in order for him. You see now how true the words of Holy Scripture are: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it!" (Prov. XXII, 6.)

Fred had just graduated from school. His father got him a position in an office, where he soon became known as a disorderly chap. Out of respect for his parents, however, the boss kept him in his employ, until he discovered one day that his interior was also in disorder and the Ten Commandments were badly mixed up in his head. One day he was in need of money. As a child he had never been very particular in matters

of money. When he was sent to buy something in a store he used to keep the change for himself; no harm in such trifles, he thought. He didn't even worry about that when he went to confession. Little wonder that in his embarrassment he now took money where it was to be found, namely, out of his employer's cash drawer. He took a little at first, then more, until he was caught and mercilessly punished. In the end he became a notorious criminal.

And Lizzie? What I am now going to tell you, happened at the beginning of my priestly career. I had to witness the whole miserable affair and, as a priest, was expected to give advice and help,—but it was too late.

Lizzie became the wife of an honest working man. In the beginning all was well. One day the husband came home earlier than usual. Lizzie was away, gossiping somewhere in the neighborhood. In the kitchen a big pot was boiling on the stove. Curious to know what was inside, he lifted the lid and, O horrors, what did he see? It is impossible to describe from the pulpit what Lizzie had in that pot. The husband said nothing, but purposely came home again earlier the next day. This time soup was boiling in the very same pot. You may imagine with what appetite he sat down to dinner. His eyes were opened. Almost every day he noticed something which showed him how dirty and disorderly his wife was. He said nothing for a long time, but began to eat his meals in restaurants, went off to playing and drink, and when he came home, often quarrelled with his wife. And the end? They grew tired of each other and to-day

they are separated. She lives with her mother, suffering from consumption and waiting for death to relieve her from her misery. And he is a confirmed drunkard. Dear children! What caused this misery? Find the answer to this question for yourselves. As I said before, I had to witness this tragedy as a young priest. I firmly resolved then to do all in my power to train children to be orderly and to remind them frequently how important the habit of keeping order is for success in life.

My dear children! You surely think that you will never have the sad experiences of Joe Disorder and his sister Lizzie. Well, then, learn to be orderly. To be orderly means to do things at the appointed time, to rise promptly in the morning, to have a specified time for prayer, study, and play. It means to put everything in its proper place, clothes, books, toys, and so on. The habit of keeping order will save you much time and will spare you many troubles and disappointments. I know, of course, how weak good resolutions are. You often promise solemnly and forget just as quickly that you ever made a promise. Should you ever forget your resolution of to-day, your father and mother will be only too willing to tack a card over the door of your room or at the head of your bed with the inscription: "Here lives Joe Disorder!" or: "Here lives Lizzie Disorder!" And this card will be left there until Joe becomes an orderly boy and Lizzie an orderly girl. You will then not have to lament in later life: "If only my parents had taught me to be orderly in my childhood, I would not be in

such an awful fix to-day!" Listen again to the words of Holy Scripture, and bear them in mind: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it!" Amen.

4. GOOD CHEER AND AGREEABLE MANNERS

(Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost)

My dear children! Everything is in good order! With these words you seem to greet me this morning. Is everything in order? You look neat to-day and your mother tells me that you have cleaned up everything nicely at home and studied your lessons for Monday already on Saturday. That is fine! But I am not yet satisfied. There is something wrong with your soul. The barometer is out of order. It runs up and down too fast. It points now to sunshine, immediately afterwards to stormy weather, then to rain, and most of the time it is "changeable." One moment you are happy and gay; then all of a sudden you grow cross and irritable, then again lazy and indifferent, and then angry and furious.

Our Divine Saviour, as a child, was highly esteemed by all for his cheerfulness and agreeable manners. He was never ill-tempered, or cross, or angry. Where is the boy or the girl amongst you of whom one could say that he or she is never in a bad humor, but always cheerful and agreeable?

Joe Disorder and Lizzie are not alone in the world; they have worthy relatives, namely Uncle Bad Temper and Aunt Ill Humor.

I

"Max is a pretty good fellow when he is in the right humor," says his mother. But I say: He is not a good fellow if his moods are as changeable as the weather! To-day he is cross and disagreeable. "Come along, Max, let us go to school together!" "I don't want to!" he growls, runs away, and goes to school,—but alone. "Hey, there, Max, come and join us in a football game!" shout Henry and Ernest and Willie. But Max doesn't want to! When they sing, Max grumbles; when they romp around, Max sits down; when they sit down, Max gets up; when they laugh, Max weeps; when they weep, Max laughs. . . . All agree that he is a most disagreeable cad. Mabel's case is exactly the same. She looks so dismal and woe-begone that you are almost afraid to talk to her. Uncle Bad Temper and Aunt Ill Humor are a fine pair, are they not, dear children?

Now I go to Max or Mabel and ask what is the matter with them. Max grows furious and Mabel spits like a wild cat. "None of your business!" "Let me alone!" Of course, it is hard to explain what is wrong with them because most of the time they do not know it themselves!

Sometimes they may have a reason for acting as they do; but very seldom. This morning Max was severely punished by his father for whipping his younger brother, and that's why he is so ill-humored to-day. Mabel had been invited to a birthday party,

but her mother refused to let her go, as she needed her at home. And now she is disappointed and mad as a wet hen.

Strange to say, most of the time Max and Mabel do not know themselves why they are so disagreeable. If they could only be made to realize that they are their own worst enemies!

This is the reason why ill-temper and bad humor are so stupid. Do you know what people think about cross and ill-tempered boys and girls? They simply leave them alone and do not bother about them. The cross-patches themselves in the end grow tired of making sour faces.

Is it not strange, my dear children, that you can see how ridiculous such behavior is in others, but think it is perfectly all right when you indulge in it? It is surely a puzzle that you can laugh at others, but when your own faults are criticized, you think it does not concern you. And instead of correcting your behavior, you quit and turn cowards. I have much to complain about cowardice among our children, especially the boys. It seems to me to be a result of too much sport. It calls for courage and a strong will to suppress moroseness and ill-humor, especially when you have been offended or things go wrong. Who among you can truthfully say that he has courage and a strong will? We read that it was the greatest boast of the Indians that they would not move a single muscle when they were tied to the stake and cruelly tortured. Only those who showed unflinching courage were regarded as men and heroes by the tribe. Who among you can claim to be re-

garded as a man and a hero? Who has the courage to suppress and conceal his ill-humor before others?

What do you do when a rattlesnake bites you? You suck out the poison, cauterize the wound, and take an antidote which renders the snakebite harmless. Treat ill-humor the same way! It is like a dangerous snakebite: hence, suck out the poison, that means, let no one know about your feelings. Cauterize the wound, that means, be friendly to all. Take an antidote, that means, be particularly friendly and obliging towards others! This is the medicine to cure you of ill-temper and bad humor.

Once there was a man who seemingly was never in bad humor or cast down, but always cheerful, pleasant, and agreeable. Three of his friends tried different means to upset his admirable equanimity and to get him angry. He liked to smoke a pipe. With the help of his wife the three friends hid his pipe and tobacco pouch. The next day they "accidentally" came to see if he was angry. He greeted them in the pleasantest manner, puffing at a long hollow bamboo stem in which he smoked potato greens. During the next night his friends cut down his beautiful rose trees, which were in full bloom. They hoped to find him in a fury the next morning and his face purple with rage. But he was as friendly and good-humored as usual and gave each of the three a handsome bouquet of roses. After all other means had failed, they had him arrested by two policemen, who told him that he was suspected of stealing. Even this trick proved powerless to upset the good

man's temper. He gave each policeman a drink and stuffed their pockets with cigars so they could smoke on the way, and went cheerfully with them to the police station. There he was sitting in the best of humor the next morning when his friends came to condole with him in his misfortune. Meantime the captain had learned how the three friends were fooling the prisoner. He rose, whispered something into the prisoner's ear, and both went off in a hurry, locking the cell door from the outside. They peered through the barred window at the imprisoned friends, wished them good luck, and vanished. The three never again played another such trick.

And now, my dear children, I am going to offer a prize to you: The one who will succeed in preserving his good humor until four o'clock next Sunday afternoon without being ill-tempered or angry, may report to me and will receive a pretty picture. Amen.

THE BREAD OF THE STRONG

(Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost)

MY dear children! A saintly priest made the following statement shortly before he died: "If I had not become a priest, I should have become a criminal." When he was asked what he meant, he replied: "There are so

many forces in my soul which drag me irresistibly towards evil. My passions at times are so strong and my strength to do good is so weak that I should have perished long ago in the misery of sin, had I not received those graces from God which he imparts in a special manner to the priest. As a priest I was allowed to approach the altar every morning to receive my Saviour in Holy Communion, and there obtained sufficient strength to resist my evil inclinations."

Once I explained the Sacrament of Penance to an innocent child. To banish all unnecessary fear, I said at the beginning: "Don't be afraid when you go into the confessional. A priest must be as kind to the people as our Saviour was on earth." I added: "After all, the confessor is a poor, sinful creature himself, and knows, like any other man, how hard it is to be good. He has to go to confession himself every week. Even our Holy Father, the Pope, must confess his sins." The child interrupted me with an indignant look: "But, Father, a priest does not sin?" "Why not, my child?" I asked. The little girl gave me an answer which I remember almost every morning on my way to the altar. She said: "One who holds our Divine Saviour in his hands and receives Him into his heart every day, cannot commit a mortal sin!"

My dear children! Why do I tell you these incidents? Because they illustrate two important truths which are to conclude our sermons on good habits. The first is: It is very difficult to acquire good habits. And why? Because our soul is so weak and inconstant in doing good. The other truth is: There is but one phy-

sician who can help us and cure this disease of the soul; I mean the great heavenly Physician, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. He offers us His powerful help in the most wonderful of all Sacraments, Holy Communion, in which He gives Himself to us as the Bread of the strong, that is, of those who want to become strong.

Accordingly we will answer these two simple questions:

I. *Why is it so difficult to be good?*

II. *Who can help us to succeed in our efforts?*

I

My dear children! Is it really so difficult to be good?

Most men have the same experience as the saintly priest of whom I spoke before. A keen observer of human nature once said: "Every man has within himself a saint and a criminal." It all depends on which one gains the upper hand. When a priest has to struggle so hard day after day, do you think you will be spared many struggles? Certainly not. And why not? Because the heart of man is prone to evil from the days of his youth. Man is naturally more inclined towards evil than towards good. This inclination towards evil is an inheritance from our first parents. Did you not feel during the past weeks how hard it is to keep your good resolutions? In the morning, when it was time to get up, a voice admonished you: "Remember the resolution you made at last month's Holy Communion; jump right out of bed and offer the first moments of

the new day to your Saviour as a token of your love for Him!" But at the same time you heard another voice hissing into your ear like the serpent in Paradise: "Oh, you stupid fellow, stay where you are! You need not do everything the priest tells you. Things are not as bad as he paints them from the pulpit. Do you think he himself gets up so early every day?"

Did you not feel how hard it is to keep your good resolution? Remember the sermon about order! For a few days things went fairly well, so that you astonished your mother beyond limits. But soon the same old disorder became noticeable again. When the good voice reproached you, the bad voice whispered: "Don't be so particular; your pastor is not so particular either. Didn't you notice how disorderly his desk looked the other day?"

Only a week ago you carried home with you the resolution to control your temper and to fight against attacks of ill-humor. And what happened? One cross word from your mother was sufficient to upset you again. As far as I could hear, not one of you could claim the prize I offered last Sunday.

And think of the many other promises which you have made to your Saviour—to stop lying, not to be greedy, to resist evil thoughts, etc., yet how often have you relapsed! You know very well what is right, and yet you do not do it.

This weakness, my dear children, is a result of original sin, which enfeebles the soul and drags it towards evil.

And yet there is one who can help you to succeed in doing good and persevering in it. When you are sick, you call in a doctor. This weakness and inconsistency of men is a disease of the soul, hence you must consult a physician of the soul. Who is he? The priest? Yes, he can advise you and help you quite a little. But all his instructions and sermons are of no avail unless another helps also, namely, the heavenly Physician of souls, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Hence St. Augustine exclaimed: "When your soul is sick, call Jesus, and you will get well again." He gives you heavenly medicine whenever he invites you to His table. Oh, what a wonderful, mysterious strength lies hidden in Holy Communion! Jesus Himself tells us: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live," that is to say, his soul will become healthy and strong in virtue. He will be showered with grace and live with Jesus in Heaven forever.

Perhaps you have heard about the great Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva. Like his Divine Master, he wished to be a good shepherd to all the souls whom God had entrusted to his care. His face and voice radiated such meekness and humility that many thought they saw and heard the Saviour Himself. And yet, like his Divine Master, he had many enemies. One day a coarse fellow scolded him in the rudest terms. Francis calmly looked him in the face and said: "I promised God not to utter a single word

whenever I get excited; it is the best way to silence anger." At another time his enemies had given him poison. He was not angry nor did he harbor revenge in his heart, although he was suffering frightful pains. On the contrary, he repaid them with benefits. You may think that this Saint was probably kind and gentle by nature. No; on the contrary, he was terribly inclined to anger and it cost him untold efforts to control his temper until he had acquired this exalted meekness. It took him twenty years of most strenuous endeavor to attain this goal. Whence did St. Francis obtain the strength to overcome his violent temper? He himself answered this question: "Through Holy Communion." Every morning when he received His Saviour he prayed: "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine!" Through Holy Communion he became the calm, strong, kindly priest and holy bishop.

Perhaps you have heard about the great St. Augustine. He was not always a Saint. In his early youth he strayed from the path of virtue. Little by little his evil inclinations had bound him as with heavy chains, so that he felt powerless to tear them asunder. Again and again he heard a voice from within, warning him: "Arise, avoid sin, shun evil!" But he felt unable to give up his sinful life and would say: "Let me go on just a little longer!" But one day these words from Holy Scripture flashed up before him like a stroke of lightning: "Now is the time to arise from the sleep of sin." At that moment he turned a new leaf and became

a new man. But it was a hard struggle. He confesses himself: "The warfare continued, for I had been the slave of sin for many years." Whence did he derive the strength to conquer? He tells us in one of his books: "The Bread of the Angels gave me strength to live like an angel. I received it daily and, strengthened by it, I passed from one day to another. The waters of divine grace flowed abundantly into my heart, and although temptations were raging within me, I remained faithful to Jesus. His love is stronger than our passions." In the end a great sinner had been transformed into a great Saint.

My dear children! Thousands have had the same experience as St. Francis de Sales and St. Augustine. Confidence and love of the Saviour preserved them from the worst. The heavenly Physician will help you, too, if you approach Him humbly as a poor, sick, helpless child, petitioning Him like the blind man by the wayside: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" If you will pray with the centurion: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter into my heart: but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed," the heavenly Physician will enter your soul, will unite Himself with you; and transform your heart, so that it becomes like His own. He will give you the necessary strength from his own Divine Heart. He has promised: "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." Hence, you must not lose courage! If you have discovered during the past few weeks how weak and inconstant your soul still is, go to Jesus and confi-

dentially tell Him just how you feel. Say to Him: "Dear Jesus, see what a disorderly child I still am, and how I still grieve my parents and teachers. Help me to be good and to follow Thy example, and by piety, purity, docility, meekness and humility, by doing my duty faithfully to the smallest detail, dear Lord, I will try to please you and my parents." Amen.

THE CHILD'S ROSARY

(Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost)

My dear children! There are many among you who dislike the rosary. That is why I want to speak to you about it to-day.

You say you do not like to tell your beads. I am not astonished at this and will not hold it against you. Children, as a rule, do not like the rosary because they do not know why and how to recite it so as to derive benefit from it.

Three tourists were climbing a high mountain. During the ascent one of them lost his beads. They fell out of his pocket and rolled sixty feet down a steep precipice, where they finally caught on a protruding rock. The man immediately slid down the precipice and succeeded in regaining his beads. The other two watched him with great astonishment, and when he had come up again, one of them could not refrain from saying: "For such a worthless thing you risked that dangerous descent?" The owner of the rosary answered: "I would have risked my life for my beads!"

Let us speak to-day about the rosary, and let us answer these two questions:

I. *Why do we recite the rosary? and*

II. *How should we recite it?*

I

Why do we recite the rosary?

1. Because it is such a beautiful and venerable prayer! Beautiful? Dear me!—you will say, there isn't another prayer that is so tiresome! Repeating the same prayers over and over again is a good sleeping draught, but do not call it beautiful. But, my dear children, is it not beautiful to meditate on the life and sufferings of our beloved Saviour and His Blessed Mother? That is precisely what we do, or at least should do, in reciting the rosary. It is for that reason that we repeat the same prayer ten times during each decade in order to have time to meditate on its mystery. The rosary is venerable because it is an ancient prayer, given us by the Blessed Mother herself, and also because it contains so many words from Holy Scripture.

2. In reciting the rosary we honor the Mother of Jesus. Mary certainly has a right to be honored. We treat our parents, priests, and teachers and many others with respect and reverence. But the Mother of God outranks them all in dignity and power. Honor to whom honor is due! Mary is most worthy of honor. Hence we offer her this fragrant spiritual wreath, the Hail Marys of the rosary.

3. We have been promised many graces and bless-

ings for reciting the rosary. The Queen of the Most Holy Rosary protects and blesses her children who daily offer her the beautiful Ave Maria roses of the rosary. She will never abandon them, but keep them safe and sound in dangers and temptations. The rosary is blessed by the Church. It is always well to carry with us something blessed by the Church. Every Catholic child should have a rosary. Reciting the rosary will draw down upon us the protection and blessing of our heavenly Mother.

2

How should we recite the rosary?

This is a very important question, my dear children. If you have a feeling of dislike for this prayer, it probably is because you do not know how to say it. Let me explain:

The rosary is said with pictures. But, you object, I have no pictures! Paint them yourself, say I! But you tell me you cannot paint. Oh, yes, you can. You have an art studio in your head. It is your fancy, your imagination. By means of the imagination you can visualize what each decade contains and what it means: How the Archangel Gabriel greets the Blessed Virgin; how our Divine Saviour lies in the manger at Bethlehem. You can visualize that. You can even hear the angels singing: "Glory to God in the highest!" You can also visualize the Saviour in His agony in the garden and on the cross, see Him rising from the dead and ascending to Heaven. These are beautiful pictures! You have time enough to paint one picture while say-

ing ten Hail Marys, and then you can proceed to the next one.

I admit that reciting the rosary requires self-denial. Oftentimes you may run short of paint, or your head will not work satisfactorily and you begin to yawn. Yes, dear children, roses have their thorns. You get tired of always repeating the same thing. I believe you. But pull yourself together and think: Now since I am half way, I must hold out to the end! There will be plenty of time for play afterwards.

Say the rosary with joy and ever fresh enthusiasm. A good start is half the victory! If you think at the beginning: "I wish it were over!" then your rattling off one decade after the other is worth little or nothing. You don't have to recite the whole rosary all at once. A decade now and then is sufficient. Better one decade recited with due attention and devotion, than five rattled off mechanically, which do not resemble fragrant roses, but rotten apples.

It pleased me very much when I passed a group of children the other day and saw how they compared their rosaries, each one claiming his to be prettiest. Those children evidently were proud of their beads, and I thought to myself: they will surely say their rosary with fervor and devotion. Never be ashamed of your rosary! I have reasons for warning you because I have often noticed a detestable cowardice among children in this regard.

A famous general was seriously wounded in battle. When they lifted him up after the battle, they noticed his right fist convulsively clutching the hilt of his

sword. Around his fist was wound a simple rosary. The general wanted to die with it on the battle-field as he had lived with it in life! My dear children! We all shall have to fight our last battle some day, I mean the struggle with death. Let us, therefore, twine our rosary around our hands. Our heavenly Mother will be delighted to receive us and guide us to Heaven. Amen.

HOW TO BECOME A SAINT

(Feast of all Saints)

My dear children! When you gaze at the sky on a calm, clear night, you notice at first only great, brilliant stars, singly or in groups. But on looking a little longer, you will discover more and brighter stars, so numerous that you cannot count them. These numberless stars resemble the Saints whose festival we celebrate to-day. They are, so to speak, the bright stars of Heaven. The greater and more brilliant are the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Apostles, the Martyrs and other prominent Saints. But besides them there is a countless number of other Saints whose feasts we do not celebrate during the year because there are not days enough for this purpose. The Church remembers them all to-day, on the Feast of all Saints. What does this Feast teach us? It shows us an immense host of Saints, who were once weak human beings like ourselves, and had to struggle with the same difficulties and temptations, but faced and overcame all obstacles with courage and fidelity and thus gained the crown of eternal glory. All

these Saints call out to us: "You, too, can and must become Saints! We have succeeded, why should you not be able to succeed?" Yes, my dear children, we are all destined for Heaven; in other words, we must all become Saints. Can we? Why, certainly! But how?

The answer to this question is given in your catechism. Why did God make you? You all know the answer: "God made me to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in Heaven." On the following pages of the catechism you find a detailed explanation as to what God demands of us in order to become Saints, namely: "We must believe in Him, keep His Commandments, receive the Holy Sacraments, and pray." By following these fundamental rules of the religious life the Saints succeeded in gaining Heaven.

I

In the first place we must believe whatever God has revealed and the Catholic Church teaches. Dear children! Perhaps you do not fully realize what a valuable treasure our holy faith is. It points out to us at all times the right way to Heaven. Without this faith we should be like wanderers travelling without compass or guide in a strange land. Faith is the bright light shining in the dark night on our way to Heaven, safeguarding and preserving us from going astray. Hence we must be grateful for the gift of holy faith, and must remain loyal to it. There are many Saints who are

patterns particularly for children. For instance, St. Pancratius, a boy who lived in Rome during the great persecutions of the early Christian era. When the enemies of Christianity had learned that Pancratius was a Christian, they denounced him to the emperor, who sent for the boy. Pancratius knew why the emperor wanted to see him; so he first went to the pope and told him. The Holy Father exhorted the young hero to be brave and steadfast, bade him to strengthen himself by the reception of Holy Communion, and then dismissed him with his blessing. Thus encouraged, Pancratius appeared before the tyrant, who seemed to be pleased with the noble boy, whose face reflected the innocence of his soul, and promised him a high position if he would deny his faith. Pancratius not only refused the offer, but reproached the emperor for his superstitious folly in worshipping idols. The kindness of the tyrant instantly changed to rage, and he ordered Pancratius to be beheaded. Upon arriving at the place of execution, Pancratius knelt down and fervently thanked God for the gift of his holy faith and for the privilege of being called upon to shed his blood for it. Then he laid his head on the block and died a martyr. My dear children! Supposing a persecution were to break out now, would you rather die than deny your faith? St. Agnes, a girl twelve years of age, suffered herself to be burned to death rather than to become disloyal to her Saviour. My dear children, be as steadfast in your faith as the early Christians were. Firmly resolve rather to die than to deny the faith.

2

To be loyal and steadfast in the faith is the first thing necessary to reach Heaven. But there is another thing that is just as important, namely, to keep the Commandments faithfully. What would it profit the wanderer to know the right way, but refuse to follow it? It would profit him nothing, even if he had eyes as sharp as an eagle's. He must follow the way. To see and to walk, both are necessary. It is not enough to know that you should obey your parents; you must actually obey then; it is not enough to believe that lying is forbidden; you must tell the truth at all times and under all circumstances; it will profit you nothing to know that you have to attend Mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation; you must actually attend Mass on these days. If you do all these things, in short, if you keep the Commandments, then you are on the right road to become a Saint.

3

The third thing that is necessary to become a Saint is to pray and receive the Sacraments. Dear children! The road to Heaven is steep and narrow, whereas the road leading to hell is broad and comfortable. If we were to try to reach Heaven by our own strength, we should not be able to hold out, but fall by the wayside. Whence are we to get the necessary strength? Through fervent prayer, day after day, and the regular

reception of the Sacraments. Dear children! Prayer and the Sacraments are as necessary for the soul as the sun is for the growth of plants. Did you ever notice, towards the end of fall and the beginning of winter, how the flowers begin to fade and droop, and soon die? Why? Because the sun has lost its vigor. It is the same with a man who does not pray. His soul will languish for want of nourishment and miss Heaven. Hence, my dear child, if you want to become a Saint, you must say your daily prayers; they are as necessary for your soul as rain and sunshine are for the growth of flowers. Therefore, make this good resolution to-day: I will say my prayers devoutly every morning and night; I will go to confession and Holy Communion often; in a word, I will do all that is necessary to become a Saint. Keep this resolution faithfully to the end of your life, and I promise you that you will become Saints in Heaven. Amen.

WITH THE POOR SOULS IN PURGATORY

(All Souls' Day)

"It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." (2 Mach. XII, 46.)

My dear children! Yesterday the Church remembered the Saints in Heaven; to-day she bids us have pity on the Poor Souls in Purgatory and help shorten their sufferings.

When I was a small boy I once walked with my

grandfather on a late November afternoon through the forests of my home land. Dark shadows were creeping through the woods, and the trees seemed like nocturnal ghosts. Now and then we heard the bark of a combative fox and the wail of a hungry deer. But for these noises, everything round about was as silent as the grave. The autumn wind began to sigh in the tree tops, and it seemed as if the trees were all whimpering with pain. Here and there lights could be seen blinking through the timber. It was all so weird and spooky. I grasped my grandfather's hand and fearfully asked him: "Grandpa, what is it that weeps like that? I am so afraid!" He quietly replied: "Hush! They are the voices of the Poor Souls. It is November—the month of the Poor Souls." Since then the keening voices of the Poor Souls have been ringing in my ears.

To-day is All Souls' Day. I know very well that it was only the wind that was moaning in the trees at that time, yet the voices of the Poor Souls are calling on us to-day and imploring us to remember them, to help them in their distress. Come, let us visit the Poor Souls in Purgatory and answer two questions:

I. *What are the Poor Souls suffering?*

II. *What do they say to us?*

Our journey is made in the darkness. Be not afraid, my dear children: faith shows us the right road. Black is the door leading to Purgatory: it is the door of death. Once we have passed through it, we can never return. Over the door is a sign-board which reads "*Place of Expiation.*" It is illuminated by a ghostly light. We ring the bell. A strange, weird sound comes

through the night—like the cry of a wounded man. A skull peers through the rusty bars of a window. "What do you want?" "We would like to visit the Poor Souls," we answer timidly. The face disappears, the door creaks, and we enter the realm of pain.

I

It is pitch-dark all around. We can see absolutely nothing at first. But we hear distinctly, and what we hear is heart-rending. We ask Death, our uncanny companion: "Why do they cry so pitifully?"—"Because they suffer."—"And what are they suffering?" Death gravely answers: "Children, it would be too difficult for me to explain that to you. You have still a living body, hence you cannot understand how fearful the torments of the soul can be. Have you ever burned yourselves? Yes? It pains awfully, does it not? For days the blisters keep on burning. Imagine you were burned alive. That is the most cruel pain a creature could endure. The Souls in Purgatory are suffering such a pain,—only far, far worse."—"But it is so dark in here, we cannot see any fire." "This fire is not like the one you have on earth. It is the greatest pain which the soul can endure, just as fire is the greatest pain for the body. If you have studied your catechism properly, you know that he who has venial sins on his soul at the particular judgment, 'shall be saved, yet so as by fire' (1 Cor. III, 15). You know now why these souls must suffer. At the moment of death they were guilty of venial sins and had contracted

debts and faults which must be cancelled even to the last penny."

"But perhaps you would like to visit some Poor Souls in their own quarters?"—"Oh, yes, we should like to."—"Come, then, I will be your guide."

Death leads us on. The first one we meet is a woman sitting on a stone. Her face is unspeakably sad. She weeps incessantly. "Why are you so sad?" we ask. "Why are you suffering thus?" She looks up in great astonishment. "You are living beings? Oh, tell me: Where is God? Where is the way to Him? I most intensively long to see Him, and yet am unable to find Him." And she starts weeping again. A little farther on a man with an expression of fearful pain stands by a tree. "My good man, what ails you?" A heavy moan escapes from his breast. "Oh, children, I can hardly endure it. This terrible yearning after God is tearing my heart asunder." He is silent again. We move on and meet a group of children, boys and girls, sitting on a thorny slope, moaning and sighing. "Children, what is the matter with you? Why do you weep so bitterly?" They look up at us. "Oh, you are children too? Can't you help us? We want to go to God, we want to go to Heaven, but cannot find the way." And they lift up their hands imploringly: "Oh, help us! help us!" A great pity grips us; we cannot endure it any longer; we turn aside.

My dear children! You will not understand this so easily. This homesickness, this longing for God is the worst suffering which the Poor Souls have to endure. A little girl lay dangerously ill with quinsy. She could

hardly breathe and at times nearly suffocated. Once, when she could breathe for a few seconds, she said: "O I wish I could die!" As this poor child was gasping for breath and struggling for relief, so the Poor Souls must feel in their intense longing for God. Do you know now why they are called "Poor" Souls?

2

We are still standing before these Poor Souls and, deeply moved, ask them: "Can't we help you? What can we do for you?" They look up to us with a grateful mien. Now let us listen to what they say to us.

The first is a *petition*: "Help us! You can help us. Pray for us especially at Holy Mass; that helps us most. My child, give me another Our Father, and I shall be free." Who was it that spoke thus? Was it your mother, your father, one of your departed brothers or sisters?

The second is a *warning*. "Do you want to be in this place of suffering some day? No? Then listen, I will tell you what you must do. Go through your Purgatory on earth!"—"Yes, but how?"—"Do what your pastor, teachers, and parents tell you! Be satisfied with a meagre dinner now and then; bear a toothache or a headache without grumbling! Rise promptly every morning and prepare your lessons for school conscientiously. Be kind and generous to poor children! Receive the Sacraments of Confession and Communion regularly and worthily!"

The third is a *consolation*. "As long as you will be

mindful of us, we shall be mindful of you. We cannot do anything for ourselves, but all the more for you. Believe us, we are grateful, far more grateful than you children. You think yourselves smart when you insult, mimic, and ridicule those who have your interest at heart and are your greatest benefactors. We can protect you and give you much good advice." We should like to ask the Poor Souls many more questions, and to speak to them about many things; but Death taps us on the shoulder with his cold, bony hand, saying: "It is time to leave. No living body is allowed to remain longer in this place of pain." And now we are back from our visit to Purgatory and sit again in our pews. But the consoling words of the Poor Souls keep ringing in our ears: "As long as you will be mindful of us, we shall be mindful of you."

Charlie was a queer boy. Long ago he had lost his good mother, to whom he clung with all his heart. Often he sat for hours by his mother's grave, brooding over the past. He had to herd the cattle for his uncle, who was a rich farmer and none too kind to the boy. But the pasture was right beside the cemetery where his mother lay buried, and so he could converse with her undisturbed. One day the big bull was about to rush upon a stranger who came up the road, unaware of the danger. Charlie, realizing the danger, quickly sprang between the furious beast and the stranger. The bull stopped for a moment, snorted wrathfully, lowered his head, rolled his eyes, and rushed upon little Charlie. The boy, terribly frightened, ran as fast as he could, calling on his dead mother to help him.

But the angry bull ran even faster, and soon the boy could feel his hot breath behind him. Charlie made frantic efforts to get away. As he stopped before the cemetery wall, the fear of death gripped him and with a wild yell he jumped over the top of the wall, the beast after him. He arrived at his mother's grave and fell into a dead faint. On recovering he noticed that he was safe and unhurt, the bull was calmly grazing on the other side of the graveyard. He had run over the boy without touching him. The mother had come to her boy's rescue and saved him from death.

Those who are mindful of the Poor Souls in Purgatory, my dear children, will be remembered by them. Amen.

YOUR PRINCIPAL FAULT

(Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost)

MY dear children! In one of my sermons I explained to you why it is so difficult for us at times to be good. I said that our evil inclinations are always trying to dissuade us from doing the right thing, and hence we must be reminded again and again that we must overcome our evil inclinations and fight against our faults. In this fight you will have to act like little David, of whom you have read in your Bible History. When the big hostile army advanced towards the camp of the Israelites, the shepherd boy picked out the strongest among the Philistines, the giant Goliath, and directed his attacks against him. He fought with cleverness and

marvelous courage. After the giant had been killed, the rest of the enemies were frightened away, and the Israelites won the battle. The many evil inclinations and faults which we all have are, so to speak, Philistines, and among them is a giant, our principal fault. If you succeed in slaying this Goliath, the rest of the hostile army will vanish in no time. Against this our *principal fault* we will now take up the fight together. However, to fight it successfully, we must know it. To this end let us answer three questions:

- I. *How can we recognize our principal fault?*
- II. *Why is it so important that we fight against this giant from the days of our youth? and finally*
- III. *Who will help us in this fight?*

I

In the first place it is necessary for you to know your principal fault. But how can you recognize this dangerous enemy? Very often you cannot do that unaided, but have to ask some one else for assistance. Your mother knows it. When I ask your mother what kind of a boy her Charlie is, she will answer: "Oh, he is all right. He is industrious and obedient, *but* he flies off the handle very quickly and is hard to manage when his temper is up." What is little Charlie's principal fault? Anger. Another mother would say: "Well, my boy is stubborn." Another: "If only my boy would not want everything he sees." About Mary her mother complains: "All she thinks about is playing and having

a good time." And Katie's mother says: "She pouts all day if I say anything unpleasant to her." The fault which your father or mother or pastor or teacher mentions first when asked about you, is your principal fault.

Sometimes that fault is hidden away within you, like little Moses in his cane basket, and parents and teachers must have sharp eyes to discover it. A noted teacher once related the following:

He had in the first grade a very smart little boy whose thoughts were always in fairyland. One day—the weather was very warm—a noxious insect landed first on the boy's forehead and then on his hand. The dreamy boy was changed in a moment. His dark eyes wore a cunning expression, resembling that of a cat watching a mouse. Now his face twitched, the insect had stung his hand. He caught it instantly. After he had observed the little creature for a while, he tore its wings out with Satanic fury and let it loose. The teacher was greatly surprised by the boy's cruelty. But at the same time he had discovered his worst fault, an almost uncontrollable desire for revenge. The good teacher did all he could to cure the boy of this evil tendency, but the right support was lacking at home. Do you know what became of that boy? He treated his companions later on with the same cruelty with which he had treated the insect. When a comrade of the eighth grade offended him, he stabbed him with his pocket knife. Later in life he committed murder. Had this boy overcome his revengeful inclination early in life, he would not have become a criminal.

2

Dear children! You know now how you may recognize your principal fault. That fault which your parents so often reprimand in you, which you have to tell regularly in confession, which you always seek to gratify most, is your principal fault. Learn from the story I have just told how necessary it is for you to overcome your principal fault in the days of your youth, before it has grown too strong. Unfortunately, many children do not exert themselves until it is too late.

In August, 1906, the Italian steamer "Sirio" sank with eight hundred passengers. Five hundred were saved by other ships which came to the rescue. The other three hundred were drowned. Awful was their struggle with death. Before the ship went down a man strapped on a belt which was filled with gold coins. Swimming, he endeavored to reach one of the life-boats. But the heavy belt dragged him down, until finally his strength gave out; the gold from which he would not part proved his undoing. At the last minute he began to untie the belt, but it was too late; he had strapped it on too tightly, he had chained himself too firmly to his gold, and sank down into the deep with the boat barely ten yards away. His last despairing cry was: "I cannot loosen it!" Many a child loves his principal fault as this man loved his gold and will not get rid of its principal fault, which drags him down until it is too late.

3

My dear children, begin to fight that fault now! It will cost you self-denial and hard struggles. But remember, you are not alone. If your parents happen to be here to-day, they will be only too glad to call your attention to your principal fault without letting the others know, and tell you in all charity what you must do to get rid of it. And should kindness accomplish nothing, your father will have to show you a little more plainly how you may chase this devil out of your soul. Should he give you a good, old-fashioned whipping, you will know that you have a father who loves you truly.

There is someone else who will also gladly help you to overcome your principal fault. It is your confessor. A child who goes to the same confessor regularly is frequently instructed how to conquer his principal fault. How fortunate you are, my dear children, as compared with children of other denominations, who have no Sacrament of Penance and no fatherly friend in the sacred tribunal to take such an affectionate interest in their spiritual welfare!

And finally, those children who have already made their First Holy Communion have a most powerful helper in our Divine Saviour Himself.

My dear children! Resolve to-day to fight against your principal fault! With one it is anger, with another sloth, with a third lying or greed. Place a book-mark in your prayer book with your principal fault written

on it, so as to remember it day by day. On to battle! The one who daily fights with the help of God by fervent prayer, and with the aid of parents and teachers, will win in the end, overthrow the giant Goliath, grow steadfast and strong in good, and be useful in life. Do not rest satisfied until you have recognized your principal fault, and then fight it. With God to victory! Amen.

CHILD AND CHARITY

(Last Sunday after Pentecost)

(Matt. XXV, 31-46)

MY dear children! What a serious Gospel is that of to-day! I noticed you felt ill at ease when you heard about the last judgment. How can we escape this awful ordeal? What must we do to be saved? These questions are plainly written in your anxious eyes. I knew that to-day's Gospel would frighten you and you would like to know what you could do so as not to be condemned to hell at the last judgment. Therefore, I read a little farther on in the Gospel and found a consoling sentence, in which our Divine Saviour shows us what will count at the last judgment and what we must do if we want to be on the right side of the great Judge with the Blessed. Above all things we must have a sincere love for our Saviour and His teaching, and at the same time a great charity towards our neighbors. Hence this last sermon of the ecclesiastical year shall point out to you this great saving means of charity.

There are many charitable organizations in our city which provide for the sick, the poor, and the aged in hospitals, homes, and infirmaries. These organizations have done and are still doing untold good. What they do on a large scale, you can do in a small way. Even children can practise charity! And that you may learn to see with open eyes the want and misery of your fellowmen and help them with a warm heart and an open hand wherever you can, accompany our dear Saviour on one of his daily trips. I place two pictures before you:

I. *The Saviour on a charity tour.*

II. *The good child dispensing charity.*

I

Come with me, my dear children, and observe the Saviour at his work. We must get up early if we want to start out with Him. No sooner has He finished His morning prayers, than Peter appears and reports: Master, a big crowd is here. "All are seeking thee" (Mark I, 37). Jesus approaches. They carry a paralyzed man on a stretcher. Pale and emaciated, he looks as if he were already dead. Over there you notice cripples on crutches, poor mothers with babes in their arms, some with hunger staring out of their faces, and others who dare not look into the pure eyes of the Saviour, remembering how often and grievously they have sinned. All—the poor, the sick, the helpless, the sinners, all flock to Jesus. Now He comes, with eyes full of compassion. All feel sure that He will help

them. He spreads out His arms towards them, as if He wished to press them to His heart. Now He addresses them in a voice which sounds like consoling music from Heaven. "Yes, you are right in coming to Me. Come to Me all you who are harassed with sickness, sorrow, and sin, come, and I will refresh you, will impart new life to you, filling your soul and body with new strength and vigor." And behold, He goes now to each individual sufferer, lays His hand upon him, and heals and helps him! Oh, how the sick shout for joy! The paralyzed man jumps up from his cot! That grateful mother thanks Jesus for raising her only son from the dead. All press around Him, shouting for joy. They want to make Him their king, but Jesus hurries off, saying to His Apostles: "Let us go into the neighboring townlets, that there also I may preach" (Mark I, 38). We accompany Him. Peter and John walk ahead with the Saviour. Jesus strides with a firm step, although the sun is hot. Suddenly all stand still; the terrified Apostles shout: "Unclean, unclean, a leper!" All fall back. Jesus goes alone toward the stranger. What a pitiful sight! Face and hands covered with sores, lips and nose almost eaten away by leprosy. An unbearable stench emanates from the leper, who throws himself on his knees before Jesus, crying with a heart full of faith and confidence: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Mark I, 40). Jesus calmly and without a sign of disgust lays His hand on the leper's head, covered with sores, and says: "I will; be thou made clean." See how gratefully the stranger thanks Him over and over, so that Jesus has to tear Himself away

as by force. Look how anxiously Peter examines the Master's hands for leprous spots! Such a spectacle had never been seen before. Jesus continues on His journey. All along the route the sick are brought to Him; everywhere He preaches, heals, and helps. All day long He performs deeds of charity, until the sun sinks in the West. Towards evening He arrives at a little village, where He would like to take a rest. But mothers come with their children to have them blessed. The Apostles try to chase them away and say to them: "Don't you see that the Master is tired? Go home and come back to-morrow morning." Jesus has overheard it. He rebukes the Apostles, calls back the frightened mothers, and says with a kindness that bespeaks His love for little children: "Suffer the children to come to me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Luke XVIII, 16). He lifts the little darlings on His knees, caresses them, plays with them, and finally gives them His blessing!

Behold, children, a day in our Saviour's life! His whole path from early morning till late at night, is strewn with roses of charity. He went about doing good! All His days on earth were like this one, and He finished His life journey with a powerful act of divine love—His death on the cross. In order to dwell among us even after death, He left us Himself in the Most Holy Eucharist, whence He beckons to us again and again: "Come to me, all ye who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you"; continues His daily visits of charity to the poor and sick, and gives Himself with unspeakable love to the dying.

2

We have followed the Saviour on His errand of charity. We must all follow His example. Our Master and Model says to us: "For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John XIII, 15). Of course, you cannot perform miracles, but you can and must every day perform acts of charity like our Lord. In order that you may do this rightly, I am going to picture to you the charitable career of a good child.

The name of this child is Hilda. Her mother was twice in a sanitarium because the constant care of a large family had worn her out. She is back now, but still feels weak and tired at times, and lately the doctor told her after a thorough examination: "Be careful, my good lady, don't work too hard!" "Oh, if I only could rest!" she replied. "I have so much work and worry every day, especially in the morning, until all the children are cared for." Hilda, who is twelve years old, overhears this conversation. Cheerfully she runs up to her mother, lovingly places her hand on her shoulder, and says with heartfelt sympathy: "Mother dear, I am a grown up girl now; I am going to help you, so that you need no longer overwork yourself." Next morning she rises with the sun. After her prayers she tiptoes into the kitchen, lights the fire, and soon the water is boiling for the coffee. Then she wakes her brothers and sisters, warning them not to make too much noise, lest they disturb mother. She helps them

get ready for school. After they are off, she trips to her mother's bed and reports joyfully: "Mother, everything is in order. Breakfast is on the table, the children have left for school, the kitchen and the other rooms are spick and span. Rest a little longer, dear!"—And really, everything is in apple-pie order. Father is surprised and praises his child. Mother can get the needed rest now, and grows stronger from day to day. Why? Because a sweet angel of charity glides daily through the rooms. The child's tender affection and cheerful zeal refresh and strengthen the mother even more than the rest. Hilda is no miracle-worker, yet she restores her mother's health completely by means of the strongest force existing in the world, the magic force of child-like, Christian charity!

Every morning at half-past eight Hilda is ready for school. Every day she leaves the house more cheerfully, humming a verse of her favorite hymn:

"As thou art meek and lowly
And ever pure of heart:
So make my heart be wholly
Of thine the counter-part."

Her heart feels as light as a feather, and in her great joy she almost runs into Betsy. "Good morning, Betsy! My, what a cross-grained face you make, were you crying, girl?"—"You know only too well, Hilda, that there is nothing but discontent in our home," says Betsy. "I had to work hard all day yesterday and early this morning, so that I had no time to study my lessons, and moreover, I got ear-cuffs for breakfast!" "Don't

worry, Betsy, I will help you." Hilda knows a quiet corner in the schoolyard. Luckily the teacher is a few minutes late to-day. Betsy steps into the schoolroom with bright, cheerful eyes. It makes her feel happy that Hilda was so good to her and even divided her lunch with her.

All runs smoothly during class-hours. Then comes recess. All make for the playgrounds. A whole class chases yelling after a poorly clad girl. The helpless creature hides in a corner, where she wipes the tears out of her eyes. Hilda runs quickly to the spot. The girls have formed a half-circle around her classmate. Hilda now recognizes the girl as poor Kate, whose father was put in jail a week ago and whose mother has been sick for over a year. And how they scold the poor child! "Yesterday she stole my lunch; she stole a dime from me! Ugh, how dirty she is!" The heartless children dance around the girl, singing: "Dirty Kate, dirty Kate." Others yell: "The thief!" Hilda sadly watches the cruel game. Then she beckons quickly to Laura, a good friend of hers, and tells her what a poor home Kate has. "What do you think about it?" she goes on; "suppose you were growing up in surroundings like these! Her father is a criminal, her mother is sick, nobody earns anything, and the poor child is neglected and hungry." Laura goes away thoughtfully. One girl tells another what little Kate has to endure at home. In a few days all have changed their mind regarding her. One secretly gives her half of her lunch, another furnishes her with worn, but still good garments, and in the afternoon Hilda goes to her pastor and speaks

to him about Kate. The sweet angel of charity hovers over the house of the poor and despised girl, bringing help and comfort, and soon Kate is a clean and contented child.

In the afternoon you see Hilda diligently at work in and about the house, trying to make things as easy as possible for the mother. She hurries from room to room like a happy sunbeam. Nor does she forget her dear old grandmother, who is confined to her bed. She brings her a bunch of flowers and a cheerful face and reads to her grandma from an interesting book for a quarter of an hour each day.

You see, my dear children, this was Hilda's way! Who will follow her? "I couldn't do all this," says Ben over there in the corner; "my mother is well and strong, and healthy; we have no sick grandmother in our house and no dirty Kate in school!" My dear children! Open your eyes and, like Hilda, you will find plenty of occasions to help a companion or a neighbor. Go out on the street; there comes an aged woman with a heavy bundle on her shoulders, hardly able to walk. Yonder some spoiled urchins are mimicking a poor man who has lost a leg in the war; others call him nicknames. Before show-windows you meet comrades looking at a nasty picture. Over there in a corner sits a classmate reading a forbidden book. With a little good will you can do exactly as Hilda; you can practise charity every day. Examine your conscience regarding this point each night, and check up the little acts of charity which you have done during the day. A day spent without an act of charity is a day lost. Perform some kind

act each day and thus transform your whole life into a career of charity. Then at the Last Judgment the Saviour will welcome you with the words: "I was hungry and ye gave me to eat, thirsty and ye gave me to drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me; in prison and ye came to me (Matt. XXV, 35 sq., 40.) Amen I say to you, inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it to me. Enter into the joy of the Lord!" Amen.

THE END

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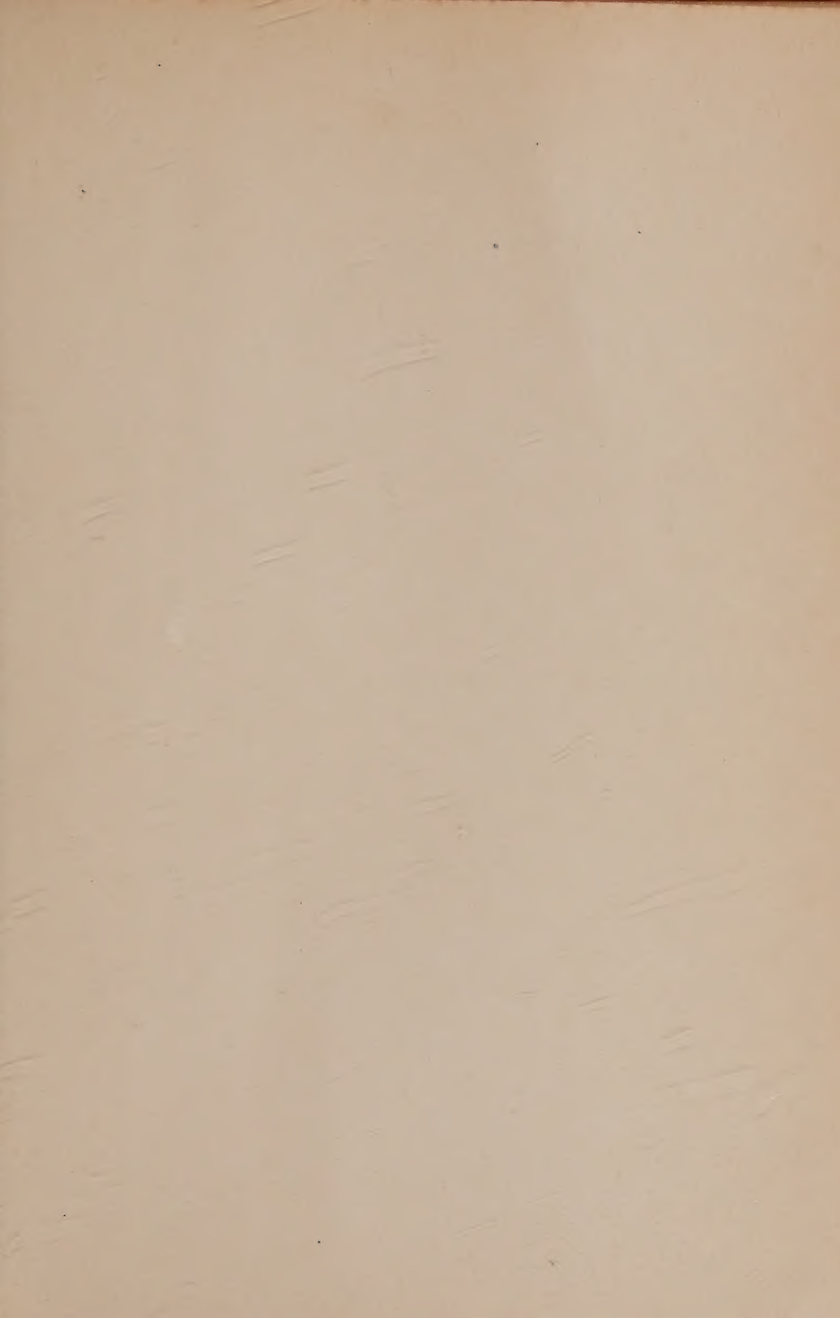
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